



Vee-Jay Records: the First Fifty Singles

The story of Vee-Jay Records very likely begins with people who are not usually associated with the company. In the late 1940's, Charles and Evelyn Aron founded Aristocrat Records in Chicago. They split from one another in 1948, and Evelyn wound up running Aristocrat – together with her partner, Leonard Chess. Late in 1949, Evelyn left Aristocrat with **Art Sheridan** to found the American (Record) Distributing Company. This left Leonard Chess with his brother Phil, and they famously renamed Aristocrat – the new label was Chess Records.

Aron married Sheridan shortly before the end of the year, and by September of 1950 they had gone back into the record business. They had signed pop singer Arnold Jones and sax player John Porter and began recording them immediately. By the end of the year, Chance had recorded several artists in preparation for a company rollout. The March 10, 1951, issue of *Billboard* announced the upcoming release of several singles – including Porter's Chance 1101. Given the moniker "Schoolboy," John Porter did a fine job and was promoted well.



JOHN (SCHOOLBOY) PORTER I'H Never Smile Again CHANCE 1101—With piano and drum backing, tenor sax man Porter runs thru the familiar ballad in a slow, moody jazz reading with some modern touches.	62--65--60--60
Schoolboy's Boogie Less effective is this boogie blues instrumental replete with trite riffs.	55--56--55--55

That

attention led to the discovery that Art Sheridan had used non-union musicians to record the aforementioned single. Sheridan claimed that they had union cards but apparently had not paid their dues. This got Sheridan in trouble with the American Federation of Musicians, who threw the book at him – preventing him from recording any union musicians until May, 1952. From then on, the union had Art Sheridan on their bad list.

While Sheridan's marriage to Aron did not last long (he remarried in May, 1954), he focused on rebranding Chance Records and building it into a strong Chicago label, along with his financial manager, **Ewart Abner**. The year 1952 saw distribution changes take hold in Chicago – changes that affected the Chance label. Sheridan expanded his business but appears to have been looking for a way to be less involved.

Enter **Vivian Carter**, a resident of Gary, Indiana since 1939. Carter had won a disc jockey contest from Chicago's WGES in 1948. She worked there temporarily but soon moved back to Gary – first at WWCA and then at WGRY. By this time she was already a pioneer and local personality in Indiana. She and her boyfriend, **Jimmy Bracken**, set up a record shop in Gary in 1950; at about this time they became acquainted with Art Sheridan.

Carter, Bracken, and Vivian's Brother **Calvin Carter**, were interested in getting into the recording business, and by Spring, 1953, this became a reality. Calvin set up a makeshift recording studio in Chicago in order to audition up-and-coming musicians, while Bracken urged his girlfriend to set up her own record label. Reportedly, Bracken and his soon-to-be-bride borrowed \$500 (possibly from a pawn shop, according to Calvin's recollection) in order to pay for the first true recording session on May 5, 1953.

Petrillo Nixes Art Sheridan's Disking License

CHICAGO, May 12.—James C. Petrillo, American Federation of Musicians prexy, with the recommendation of reps of Local 208 here, this week revoked the recording license of Art Sheridan, op of American Record Distributing here. A rep of Local 208 told *The Billboard* that investigation disclosed that Chance records, which were cut by Schoolboy Porter, tenor sax man, were played by non-union sideman. No union contracts were ever turned into the AFM office, he added. Sheridan, when contacted, said that he had okayed the use of his franchise by Steve Chandler, local franchisee, who cut the disks and had them pressed by Sheridan's Armour Plastics pressery. Sheridan said that first hint he had of the union trouble was late in April when notified by the AFM. He said Chandler claimed that he used boys who had union cards, but, who, at the time of the sessions, were not paid up members. As a result, he held back the contracts and the union took action.

Revocation of the Sheridan license marks the first such action locally in a long time. Move may point up the fact that the AFM has

Chi Distrib Changes in R&B Field

CHICAGO, Feb. 23.—A series of distrib changes here has resulted in the strengthening of the Jimmy Martin org with the addition of the Atlantic line, the shifting of Monroe Passis, formerly one of the major reps in the rhythm and blues field, to a virtual inactive status in this phase of the business, and the addition of two new labels to Art Sheridan's American Distributing firm, also acting in the r. & b. field. Martin takes on Atlantic from Passis, adding the label to his recently acquired MGM line. Passis, who still retains his retail store, has not signified his future plans in the distributing end of the biz, but was known to have been considering dropping out for some time.

Sheridan has picked up two local labels, Chance and Life, to add to his stable. Latter, headed by J. Mahoney, is readying a more aggressive cutting and selling campaign, with the American appointment a step in this direction.

Leonard Chess, head of Chess Records, with his distrib problems now under control, plans to expand his activities, to date confined strictly to r. & b. into the country and Western field, and will head for the South next month to set up this activity.

By Frumkin, also heavy in the r. & b. distributing field, will move his headquarters from the Northwest side of Chicago to Record Row next week.

That recording was of the Spaniels – a local (Gary, Indiana) group who had attended the same high school as the Carters. The Spaniels recorded enough music for two singles, although only two songs from the session were released right away.

During the same phase, they also met up with blues man Jimmy Reed, who had approached Chess Records about getting started in the music business – but Chess had seemed too busy. The way Reed tells the story, he didn't like the way Chess was organized or how they wanted to record him. Calvin Carter remembers meeting Jimmy Reed while Reed was working for a Chicago stockyard while he tried to get his music career going.

**RHYTHM AND
BLUES NOTES**
— B. BOB ROLONTZ —
Vivian Carter, r.&b. deejay on WGRY, Gary, Ind., has started a new r.&b. label, Vee Jay, in partnerships with Jimmy Bracken. First artists signed by the label are Jimmy Reed and the Spaniels. . . .

. . . New diskery has been started in Gary, Indiana. Headed by Vivian Carter, deejay at WGRY, and Jimmy Bracken. Called "Vee Jay Records". Artists include Jimmy Reed, and a vocal group, The Spaniels. First sides just released. Local distribution being handled by Art Sheridan. . . .

Vivian Carter (V) and James Bracken (J) put their names together and formed Vee-Jay Records that spring and arranged for their first releases to come out that same summer.



VJ-100 "High and Lonesome" / "Roll and Rhumba"
Jimmy Reed
Release Date: c. July 25, 1953

THE SPANIELS
(VeeJay 101)
B+ "BABY, IT'S YOU" (2:37) [Conrad Music] The Spaniels dish up a slow lush love tune in soft style. Group sounds good.
B "BOUNCE" (2:41) [Conrad Music] The group switches to a fast rocker on this end and the result is a good reading of a cute belter.



VJ-101 "Baby, It's You" / "Bounce"
The Spaniels
Release Date: CB July 25, 1953

Art Sheridan of Chance Records has purchased the masters on "Baby, It's You," by The Spaniels. "Our biggest number at this time," Art claims. . . .

Within a week, requests for "Baby, It's You" were so strong that Vee-Jay realized they were unable to process the order. They spoke with Art Sheridan at Chance Records, who agreed to press additional copies of both of the new Vee-Jay singles. People have been speculating about Sheridan's involvement in Vee-Jay from the beginning – noticing that the label designs for their 78 RPM singles were quite similar.

Dealing with the demand for such a hot single drew much of the attention of the Carters and Jimmy Bracken, so that the rest of summer and most of fall saw them recording for future releases – but Vee-Jay did not release any additional records.

The next record released by Vee-Jay was the product of Clarence McClam, a former sharpshooter and boxer who was dubbed "the Professor of the Blues." Appearing on the label as "Pro. McClam," he recorded "Boot-Um" (a.k.a. "Boot 'Em Up, Baby") live in a bar in Gary – making him Gary's first solo blues artist to make a record.



VJ-102 "Boot-Um" / "Policy Blues"
 Pro. McClam
 Release Date: CB and BB, December 12, 1953

CLIMBING FAST!
THAT'S MY DESIRE
 b/w
HURRY HOME BABY
 by
THE FLAMINGOS
 Chance 1140

BABY, IT'S YOU
 b/w
BOUNCE
 by
THE SPANIELS
 Chance 1141

CHANCE RECORD COMPANY
 1225 E. 47th ST.
 CHICAGO 15, ILL.
 PHONE: KENWOOD 8-5131

PRO. McCLAM
 (VeeJay 102)

C "POLICY BLUES" (2:43) [Conrad Music BMI—Roth, McClam] McClam sings a middle tempo blues telling how gambling keeps him broke all the time even though he works every day. McClam's vocal is good although riff is routine.

B "BOOT-UM" (2:37) [Conrad Music BMI—McClam] Flipover is a quick tempo tune that moves energetically with the ork providing a wildish backing. McClam sings it out excitingly.

CHICAGO:
 What makes a glowing Christmas story? And a grand opening item for the New Year? We think it's the following: Seems like, just last week, 12/16, while Ernie Leaner of United Record Distributors was very, very busy taking orders, and helping his men pack off those Xmas record shipments, in walked Vivian Carter and Jimmy Bracken. Vivian and Jimmy are partners in Vee Jay Records. Vivian is also Gary's well known WGRY deejay. Originally the two had become partners back in '48 in a small record shop. Anyway, to make a long story shorter, Vivian casually mentioned to Ernie, after the usual affable greetings among these friends, "We're looking for a preacher." Ernie's ears pricked right up. His eyes lighted. But, looking out the window, with the snowy rain acomin' down, Ernie said, "I know a preacher. He's just down the street. Now you two stay here out of this bad weather," Ernie urged, "and I'll go fetch him." So Ernie dashed down the street just as fast as he could go. And on the way bought a gorgeous bouquet for Vivian. Came back with the preacher and said, "Here they are Reverend." So-o-o-o with Ernie Leaner and his secretary serving as the two necessary witnesses, Vivian Carter and Jimmy Bracken tied themselves together into the firmest kind of partnership by becoming Mr. and Mrs. And this happened right in the gay and festive Christmasy offices of United Record Distributors here in good, old Chicago. Ernie just beamed and beamed. His secretary dropped that usual happy tear like all women do at weddings. Now Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Bracken are going to bring out their new release to not only honor this very grand and unusual occasion but, at the same time, to honor their very dear friends, George and Ernie Leaner. We still think this is one of those "dream stories" that happens to a columnist but once in a lifetime and, especially, at Xmastime.

Although "Boot 'Em Up" appeared in the trades by itself in December, the October 24th issue of *Cash Box* shows that Vee-Jay had prepared three singles for release at that time. The other singles may have come out at that time, or they might have appeared in late winter – the March 6, 1954, issue of *Cash Box* quotes them as saying that VJ 103 was currently their top seller. Anyway, their ad from October is interesting in another respect: it shows the Vee-Jay address in Gary, Indiana.



3 New Releases

① **The Spaniels**
SINGING
"THE BELLS RING OUT"
B/W "HOUSE CLEANING"

② **Wellington Blakeley**
SINGING
"GYPSY WITH A
BROKEN HEART"
B/W "SAILOR JOE"

③ **Professor of
the Blues**
SINGING
"BOOT 'EM UP"
B/W "POLICY BLUES"

Vivian Carter
VEE-JAY RECORDS
1640 BROADWAY
GARY, INDIANA
(Phone: 2-9001)

VJ-103 "The Bells Ring Out" / "House Cleaning"

The Spaniels

Release Date: CB October 24 or November, 1953 (?)

This single sold well enough to warrant a second pressing with a different typeface on the label.



WELLINGTON BLAKELY O.
(Vee-Jay 104)

③ "A GYPSY WITH A BROKEN HEART" (2:37) [Conrad Music BMI—B. Roth] Wellington Blakely & Orchestra etch a gypsy melody complete with string treatment. A definite pop item.

③ "SAILOR JOE" (2:41) [Conrad Music BMI—B. Roth] Flip is a middle tempo Calypso lilt with a Latin beat. Chanter does an ok job on the vocal chores.

WELLINGTON BLAKELY

Sailor Joe58

VEE JAY 104—Listenable calypso effort receives a happy vocal from Blakely over standard backing for this type of tune. (Conrad, BMI)

A Gypsy With a Broken Heart...50

Blakely turns in an adequate reading of a slight new ballad backed by with a Latin beat by the ork. (Conrad, BMI)

VJ-104 "A Gypsy With a Broken Heart" / "Sailor Joe"

Wellington Blakely

Release Date: CB November 21, 1953

Not long after the Carter-Bracken nuptials, Vee-Jay released another single – the second for Jimmy Reed.



VEE-JAY 105 is a new release by Jimmy Reed and spotlights his best efforts to date. He does "I Found My Baby," backed with "Jimmy's Boogie." Response is starting to pick up fast on this item. Don't pass it up.

JIMMY REED TRIO
I Found My Baby79
VEE-JAY 105—Over a pulsating ork beat, the singer turns in a mighty listenable rendition of a blues lament. Tho the material is not exceptional, the warbler's rendition could help this one get action. Watch it. (Conrad, BMI)
Jimmie's Boogie....77
A wild boogie opus receives a pounding instrumental reading by the trio, with the guitar and mouth organ turning in some sensational sounds. The side moves, and it's a fine coupling for the flip. (Conrad, BMI)

VJ-105 "Jimmie's Boogie" / "I Found My Baby"
Jimmy Reed and his Trio
Release Date: BB January 2, 1954



2 New Releases!
THE SPANIELS
"GOODNIGHT SWEETHEART GOODNIGHT"
b/w
"YOU DON'T MOVE ME"
Vee Jay 107
MACEO WOODS SINGERS
"GARDEN OF PRAYER"
b/w
"SWEETER AS THE DAYS GO BY"
Vee Jay 106
Vee-Jay RECORDS, INC.
1155 E. 47th St., Chicago 15, Ill.

VJ-106 "Garden of Prayer" / "Sweeter as the Day Goes By"
The Maceo Woods Singers
Release Date: CB March 13, 1954

Maceo Woods had recorded gospel for Apollo. Vee-Jay made a good move in drawing him to the label.



VJ-107 "Goodnite, Sweetheart, Goodnite" / "You Don't Move Me"
The Spaniels
Release Date: CB March 13, 1954

The latest Spaniels record was a hit in several locales throughout the spring and summer, giving Vee-Jay another big success under the fledgling company's belt.

Before spring, Vee Jay moved its headquarters to 1155 East 47th Street in Chicago. By April they had moved down the block to 412 East 47th. They remained at that location until August; eventually Ebony Records, which had been at 417, occupied the 412 building. In August they moved around the corner to a larger place at 4747 South Cottage Grove. Vee-Jay was a rapidly rising star – going toe-to-toe with other Chicago labels like Chess and Chance.



Run to Jesus; Keep Trusting—The Maceo Woods Singers, Vee Jay 108

VJ-108 "Run to Jesus"/ "Keep Trusting"
 The Maceo Woods Singers
 Release Date: BB June 19, 1954 (possibly released in May)



... Vee-Jay diskery has just released two more spirituals. "Own Me As A Child" b/w "Walking Up The King's Highway" by the Lockhart Singers. And "Old Camp Ground" b/w "All Night, All Day" by Brother Isaiah's Church Of God & Christ Choir. Diskery seems to do very nicely in the spiritual department.

VJ-109 "Old Camp Ground"/ "All Night, All Day"
 Brother Isaiah's Church of God in Christ Choir
 Release Date: BB June 5, 1954



VJ-110 "Own Me as a Child"/ "Walking Up the King's Highway"
 The Lockhart Singers
 Release Date: BB June 5, 1954

2 GREAT SPIRITUALS

THE
LOCKHART SINGERS
 "Own Me As A Child"
 b/w
 "Walking Up The King's Highway"
 VEE JAY 110

BROTHER ISIAH'S CHURCH OF GOD AND CHRIST'S CHOIR
 "Old Camp Ground"
 b/w
 "All Night, All Day"
 VEE JAY 109

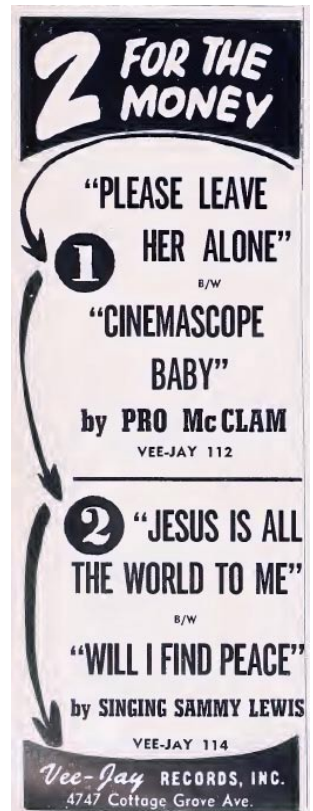
Vee-Jay RECORDS, INC.
 412 E. 47th St. Chicago 15, Ill.

“Own Me as a Child” was quite successful, as far as records by local gospel artists go; however, the Lockhart Singers never recorded again.



VJ-111 “School Days on My Mind”/ “Ain’t Times Hard”
 Floyd Jones
 Release Date: CB July 17, 1954

Vee-Jay promoted the Jones single for approximately a month, but *Cash Box* only gave each side a C+ rating in its reviews. “Ain’t Times Hard” emerged as the A-side – being a ballad about a guy who has hit hard times and who is about to move to another city, but neither was a hit outside of Chicago.



VJ-112 “Please Leave Her Alone”/ “Cinemascope Baby”
 Pro. McClam
 Release Date: CB October 9, 1954

Although they were recording quite a few songs, some of them were not released right away. Professor McClam’s latest single came out after singles 113 and 115, but “Cinemascope Baby” – about his love for a woman who weighs 200 pounds, is an interesting listen.

Interesting to note modern merchandising methods currently being employed by most R&B diskeries. . . . It’s a well-know fact that record companies spare no expense in assuring good record sessions. Acceptance, however, is up to the public. Public opinion is most important. Not only to the diskeries, but to distributors and dealers. . . . For example, Leo Kolheim, “Mr. Pep” of the Vee-Jay diskery, told us the following story. Firm spared no expense cutting three waxings. Vivian Carter, dee-jay of Gary’s WGRY, concentrated heavily on these three new recordings. Public reaction was strong for only two. Kolheim decided that these were the two to be released. In spite of the expense incurred in recording the third disk, it may never be released. This certainly points to the new and better merchandise methods, not only employed by Vee-Jay, but by all leading R&B record diskeries. . . . The two releases which Leo Kolheim reports received most acclaim from WGRY listeners are, “Baby I Need You Now” b/w “My Lovin’ Baby” by **The Eldorado’s** and “Off Time” b/w “Fussin’ And Lovin’” by **Floyd Valentine**. . . .



VJ-113 "Off Time"/ "Fussin' and Lovin'"
 Floyd Valentine
 Release Date: CB September 4, 1954

Billboard described "Fussin' and Lovin'" as a "hand-clapper" and rated it as the A-side, although they gave both sides a fine rating of 74. The singer is happy with his relationship with a woman who complains one minute and wants to make love the next. Apparently he was praising the virtues of "make-up sex."



VJ-114 "Jesus is All the World to Me"/ "Will I Find Peace"
 Singing Sammy Lewis
 Release Date: CB October 9, 1954

Although the A-side is not the most famous song with that title, the flip-side – "Will I Find Peace" became a classic gospel song.



VJ-115 "Baby I Need You (Now)"/ "My Loving Baby"
 The Eldorados
 Release Date: CB September 4, 1954

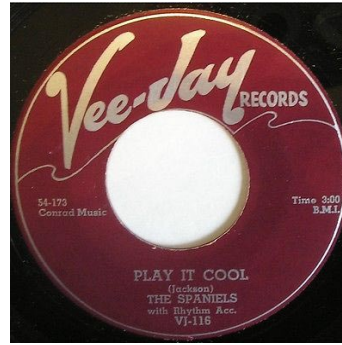
2 FOR THE MONEY

BOTH THESE BRAND NEW RECORDS GOT TERRIFIC REACTION FROM LISTENERS TO TOP DISK JOCKEY SHOWS

1 The Eldorado's "Baby I Need You Now" AND "My Loving Baby" VEE JAY 115

2 Floyd Valentine's "Off Time" AND "Fussin' And Lovin'" VEE JAY 113

Vee-Jay RECORDS, INC.
 4747 Cottage Grove Ave.



VJ-116 "Let's Make Up"/ "Play it Cool"

The Spaniels

Release Date: CB September 25, 1954

The latest release from the Spaniels was a local success in several major markets, including Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Saint Louis. The A-side received an "83" rating from *Billboard*, who predicted that the song could be another "coin-grabber." Indeed it was. The singer has a "case of the blues" because his girlfriend wants to break up. It's a classic plea about an all-too-common predicament.

2 FOR THE MONEY

FOLLOW-UP TO THEIR SENSATIONAL SMASH "GOODNIGHT, SWEET-HEART, GOODNIGHT"

1 The Spaniels' "Let's Make Up" AND "Play It Cool" VEE-JAY 116

2 The Cash Box BEST BET SEPT. 11 ISSUE The Eldarados' "Baby I Need You Now" AND "My Loving Baby" VEE-JAY 115

Vee-Jay RECORDS, INC. 4747 Cottage Grove Ave.



VJ-117 "Zig-Zag"/ "So Let it Be"

Julian Dash

Release Date: CB December 18, 1954 ("released this week," but ads since Sept.)

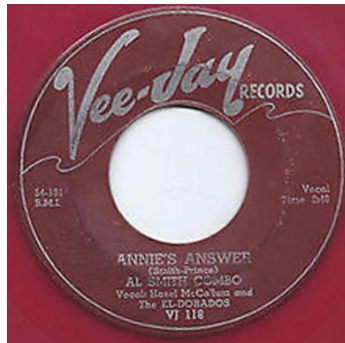
Julian Dash was best known for his tenor sax work with Erskine Hawkins and Buck Clayton, but after two years recording for the Sitting In With label, Dash had had a brief stint with Mercury Records before moving to Vee-Jay. He recorded four songs for his new label on August 13th, two of which were released here; the other two remained unreleased. "Zig Zag" is immediately recognizable as a catchy (and famous) instrumental that continues to be enjoyed today.

2 NEW HITS...

"ZIG ZAG" b/w "SO LET IT BE" JULIAN DASH Vee-Jay 117

"YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO" b/w "BOOGIE IN THE DARK" JIMMY REED Vee-Jay 119

Vee-Jay RECORDS, INC. 4747 Cottage Grove Ave. Chicago 15, Illinois



VJ-118 "Annie's Answer"/ "Living With Vivian"
A-side: Al Smith Combo (advertised as by vocalist Hazel McCollum)
B-side: Al Smith Combo (advertised as by the Eldorados with the Al Smith Combo)
Release Date: CB November 13, 1954; BB November 6, 1954

Billboard's review in the December 4 issue said that the A-side wouldn't be played on the radio "for obvious reasons." The song was an answer to the Midnighters' hit, "Annie Had a Baby." Hazel, as Annie, sings that she "knows just what to do" in order not to have a baby, and she doesn't want or need a baby.



VJ-119 "You Don't Have to Go"/ "Boogie in the Dark"
Jimmy Reed
Release Date: CB December 11, 1954

The trades were optimistic about both sides of the new Reed single, and with good reason. The A-side spent over two months on the Best Sellers in Stores chart for *Billboard* – although it took two months to get there. The Reed Trio does a great job on this pounding R&B tune. Vee-Jay had released another classic record. "Boogie in the Dark" is an instrumental with a bit of a rock and roll sound.



VJ-120 "Revive Us Again"/ "Move Up"
 Holy Gospel Singers
 Release Date: CB January 22, 1955

The group recorded the two sides of this gospel single in April, 1954, and Vee-Jay waited to release them. These are rousing versions of spiritual songs. One label variation shows the publisher of both songs as Conrad Music – one of Vee-Jay’s in-house publishing companies, which Martin and Morris distributed. The corrected label indicates Martin and Morris as the publisher of “Revive Us Again” and shows “Move Up” as being in the public domain.

Lotsa news from Vee-Jay way this week. Viv Carter took time out from her busy sked to inform us that diskery has signed the King Kolax Kombo. Also Tommy Dean from out of St. Louis. Calvin Carter, Vivian's brother, will now be spending more time in the office. Ditto Jimmy Bracken. Meanwhile, firm's "You Don't Have To Go" by Jimmy Reed and "Play It Cool" by The Spaniels are going real well. . . .



VJ-121 "My Thing"/ "My Other Thing"
 Willie Jones
 Release Date: CB January 22, 1955

Reviewed on the 29th as being “boppish,” Willie’s “things” are instrumental jazz/blues pieces that showcase Jones’ piano skills. Willie Jones was popular in and around Chicago but was not well-known elsewhere. His piano stylings influenced fellow jazz musician, Sun Ra. On this record, Betty Dupree plays bass and Earl Phillips is the drummer.

THE HITS TODAY ARE ON VEE-JAY

NEW RELEASES!

“EVENTIME”
 b/w
“DEANIE BOY”
 JOE BUCKNER with
 TOMMY DEAN'S ORCHESTRA
 VEE-JAY 125

“WONDER WHY”
 b/w
“GET LOST”
 THE RHYTHM ACES
 VEE-JAY 124

“MY THING”
 b/w
“MY OTHER THING”
 WILLIE JONES
 VEE-JAY 121

“AMAZING GRACE”
 b/w
**“LEANING ON THE
 EVERLASTING ARM”**
 MACEO WOODS at the
 HAMMOND ORGAN
 VEE-JAY 122

“MOVE UP”
 b/w
“REVIVE US AGAIN”
 HOLY GOSPEL SINGERS
 VEE-JAY 120

Vee-Jay RECORDS, INC.
 4747 Cottage Grove Ave.
 Chicago 15, Illinois



VJ-122 "Amazing Grace"/ "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms"
 Maceo Woods
 Release Date: CB January 22, 1955

Reissued in 1963 as Oldies OL-201.



VJ-123 "It's a Mighty Hard Road"/ "Jesus was the One"
 Singing Sammy Lewis
 Release Date: CB January 22, 1955

Lewis wrote both sides of this gospel single, which he recorded in October. Though it was not a hot seller in 1955, Vee-Jay reissued it on the Oldies label (OL-210).



VJ-124 "I Wonder Why"/ "Get Lost"
 The Rhythm Aces
 Release Date: CB January 22, 1955

Billboard gave the A-side a generous review (71) in their issue dated the 29th, but it never really took off. The single features full-group harmony singing – not merely lead and backup.

THE HITS TODAY ARE ON VEE-JAY

NEW RELEASES!

"EVENTIME"
 b/w
"DEANIE BOY"
 JOE BUCKNER with
 TOMMY DEAN'S ORCHESTRA
 VEE-JAY 125

"WONDER WHY"
 b/w
"GET LOST"
 THE RHYTHM ACES
 VEE-JAY 124

"MY THING"
 b/w
"MY OTHER THING"
 WILLIE JONES
 VEE-JAY 121

"AMAZING GRACE"
 b/w
**"LEANING ON THE
 EVERLASTING ARM"**
 MACEO WOODS at the
 HAMMOND ORGAN
 VEE-JAY 122

"MOVE UP"
 b/w
"REVIVE US AGAIN"
 HOLY GOSPEL SINGERS
 VEE-JAY 120

Vee-Jay RECORDS, INC.
 4747 Cottage Grove Ave.
 Chicago 15, Illinois



VJ-125 "Eventime"/ "Deanie Boy"

Tommy Deans

Release Date: CB January 22, 1955

With the Chance label folding, pianist Tommy Deans was one of the artists who went over to Vee-Jay at that time. "Eventime" features vocals by Joe Buckner. The group recorded four songs at the time, two of which were released in July.



VJ-126 "Any Old Lonesome Day"/ "Floyd's Blue"

Floyd Jones

Release Date: CB April 2, 1955

FLOYD JONES
(Vee-Jay 126)

C+ "FLOYD'S BLUE" (3:15) [Conrad BMI—Jones] Floyd Jones and his orchestra etch a slow jump blues instrumental with a good wailing sound.

B "ANY OLD LONESOME DAY" (3:09) [Conrad BMI—Jones] Jones sings a slow country blues with a true deep south flavor. Jones tells his melancholy tale with emotion.

On the vocal side, Jones proclaims the misery of losing someone you love.



VJ-127 "One More Chance"/ "Little Miss Love"

The El Dorados

Release Date: CB April 2, 1955 (previewed? March 12)

THE EL DORADOS
(Vee-Jay 127)

B "LITTLE MISS LOVE" (2:40) [Conrad BMI—Johnny Moore] The El Dorados blend excitingly on a driving up-beat with good results.

B+ "ONE MORE CHANCE" (3:08) [Conrad BMI—Johnny Moore] The El Dorados come up with a very strong wax in their treatment of the slow bouncer romantic tune. A smooth workin' team that give their etchings that litt'e bit extra. Could make noise.

While neither song was a hit, both songs hold up well, with "One More Chance" being a romantic ballad.



VJ-128 "I Thank You, Lord"/ "I'll Let Nothing Separate Me"
 The Raspberry Singers of Cleveland
 Release Date: CB March 12, 1955

This was the first single by Raymond Raspberry's gospel group – a group that went on to record a fair number of singles and LPs, the best-known of which were on the Savoy label. Raspberry himself played the piano and arranged their music. Although the group was noteworthy for having both male and female members (Dorothy Johnson Drake sang soprano), it was the talented voice of Carl Hall that attracted the most attention. Johnson Drake's voice dominates the B-side, while Carl Hall's distinctive voice adorns side A. "I'll Let Nothing Separate Me" wound up being included on the various-artists album, *Let's Sing About Freedom* (Vee Jay VJLP-5044). Hall's most famous role, which he played in two casts, was as the title character in the *Wiz*.



VJ-129 "I Really Do"/ "Tell Me Baby"
 The Five Echoes
 Release Date: CB March 12, 1955

The group's name was misspelled as "Echos" on the label. The Echoes had been another Chance group – this time recording for the Chance subsidiary known as Sabre. The lead voices were performed by Wally (Spriggs) Wilson and Tommy Hunt. Of the two sides, "Tell Me, Baby" is the more upbeat – a fun doo-wop song.





VJ-130 "Trust Him Today"/ "Going Back to My God"
 The Famous Boyer Brothers
 Release Date: CB March 12, 1955

Not only were the Brothers members of the Chance Records stable of artists, but also this was actually a reissue of Chance single number 5009 from October, 1954. This was basically a second pressing of a current release.



VJ-131 "Do-Wah"/ "Don'cha Go"
 The Spaniels
 Release Date: BB April 9, 1955

The *Billboard* ad promotes "Don'cha Go" as the top side, while the *Cash Box* ad a few weeks later promotes "Do-Wah."





VJ-132 "I'm Gonna Ruin You"/ "Pretty Thing"

Jimmy Reed

Release Date: BB April 16, 1955

The label promoted Jimmy Reed's new single for several weeks, but it remained only a local success.



VJ-133 "Strange Girl"/ "Pretty Thing"

L. C. McKinley

Release Date: BB April 23, 1955 (first mentioned March 26)

Blues guitarist Larry C. McKinley had released one single for the Chicago-based States label. That record, "Companion Blues," showed promise but sold modestly. McKinley had played on Eddie Boyd's hit single from 1952, "Five Long Years" but had not succeeded since then. This single, too, was not so successful, but he did release another for Vee-Jay. McKinley did mostly session work, and a promo photo of him shows him using the name "McKindly."





**THE DELLS
COUNT MORRIS**
(Vee-Jay 134)

C+ "BLUES AT THREE" (2:35)
[Tollie BMI—C. Morris] Count Morris rides through a middle beat blues featuring the sax and piano in effective solo bits. Ok instrumental wax.

B "TELL THE WORLD" (2:41)
[Tollie BMI—V. Allison] The Dells blend on a slow rhythmic blues ballad. Strong lead helps make it a good piece of r & b wax.

VJ-134 "Tell the World"/ "Blues at Three"

The Dells/Count Morris

Release Date: CB May 7, 1955

Recording first as the El Rays, the Dells released a single for Checker Records – the Chess subsidiary. Although the record did not sell, Vee-Jay wanted to see what they could do. With their new name and a great vocal group sound, they recorded "Tell the World." This was enough to lead to a lifelong career in music for the group.



WARDELL GRAY
(Vee-Jay 135)

C+ "OSCAR'S BLUES" (2:41) [O. Peterson] The Wardell Gray Quintet waxes a fast beat jazz treatment of the blues. Instrumental deck that will go in the specialized spots.

C+ "HEY THERE" (2:44) [Adler, Ross] Gray's group dishes up a modern treatment of the pop favorite. Same comments.

VJ-135 "Oscar's Blues"/ "Hey There"

Wardell Gray

Release Date: CB May 7, 1955

Oscar Peterson had recorded his "Blues" number in 1950. Gray recorded his cover in January (1955), and his presence with the label was something that they announced right away (in *Billboard*, January 29th). By this time, though, Gray's career was declining. Just after his single came out, he started to rehearse with Benny Carter's group in order to perform at the Grand Opening of the new Moulin Rouge Hotel in Las Vegas – a venue famous for being an integrated casino. Gray vanished, failing to appear for the performance at the hotel. On May 25th, his body was found out in the desert. His neck was broken, but the coroner ruled that he had died of a drug overdose. The casino closed six months later, adding further to the mysterious circumstances surrounding Wardell Gray's death.



VJ-136 "Goodnite Blues"/ "Vivian"

King Kolax

Release Date: June, 1955

Vee-Jay signed King Kolax to a contract in early January. After his work with the Chance and Checker labels, he had come over to Vee-Jay in December, 1954, to record at least five songs. Only these two were released at the time. King Kolax went on to play at the Moulin Rouge – which shortly folded. He had recorded "Goodnite Blues" during his 20th year in show business.



VJ-137 "Great Day, Part 1"/ "Great Day, Part 2"

Rev. James Lofton

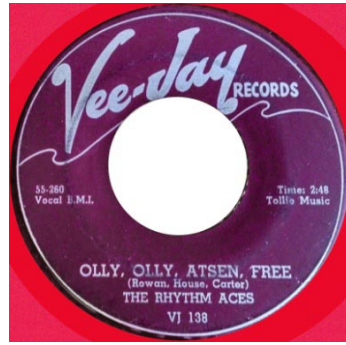
Release Date: BB May 28, 1955

The label defied conventional wisdom regarding the popularity of gospel music by releasing three singles in that style in May/June, 1955. The records sold well enough that they were destined to do something similar later on.

Lofton's backing group was a 250-member choir that was usually named the Loftonaires, although the first (1954) pressing of this single on the Detroit-based Prosperity label merely called them the Church of Our Prayer Choir. The second pressing has similar label copy to the Vee-Jay release, leading to the possibility that both came out in 1955, with the Prosperity single being sold in the Detroit area while Vee-Jay handled wider distribution.

Vee-Jay #137
"GREAT DAY"
 Parts I and II
 by
 Reverend Lofton's 250-Voice Choir
 ★ ★ ★
 Vee-Jay #139
**"FEED ME TILL I
 WANT NO MORE"**
 b/w
"I WANT TO BE A CHRISTIAN"
 by
 The Lockhart Singers
 ★ ★ ★
 Vee-Jay #140
**"CLIMBING HIGH
 MOUNTAINS"**
 b/w
"THE FOUNTAIN"
 by
 Brother Isaiah's Choir
VEE-JAY Records, Inc.
 4747 Cottage Grove Ave. Chicago
 Phone: WAGner 4-2826





THE RHYTHM ACES
(Vee-Jay 138)

B+ "OLLY, OLLY, ATSEN, FREE" (2:48) [Tollie BMI — Rowan, House, Carter] Cute fast beat novelty rocker that moves with gayety and excitement. Good jump ditty for the kids. Happy gimmicked vocal treatment. Could stir up some action.

B "WHISPER TO ME" (3:00) [Tollie BMI—Rowan, House] The Rhythm Aces blend on a soft breeze wafted sentimental. Ok coupler.

VJ-138 "Whisper to Me"/ "Olly, Olly, Atsen, Free"

The Rhythm Aces

Release Date: CB May 21, 1955

Although *Cash Box* preferred the B-side, "Whisper to Me" is the more typical R&B vocal-group sound – complete with a lead tenor backed by deeper, bass vocals.



VJ-139 "Feed Me Till I Want No More"/ "I Want to Be a Christian"

The Lockhart Singers

Release Date: CB May 28, 1955

The Lockhart Singers followed up their hit, "Own Me as a Child," with another single that had been recorded the same day. Together, these were the group's only recordings for Vee-Jay. Although this single did not duplicate the sales of their previous effort, the group performed all four songs quite well, and the singers were remembered fondly in Chicago, even though they formally quit singing together in 1957.

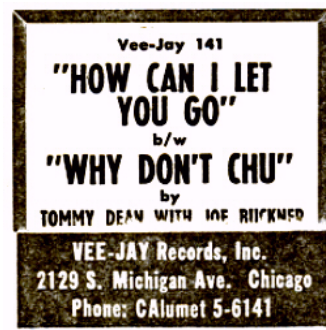


VJ-140 "Climbing High Mountains"/ "The Fountain"
 Brother Isaiah's Choir
 Release Date: CB May 28, 1955

BROTHER ISAIAH'S CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST CHOIR
 (Vee-Jay 140)
B "THE FOUNTAIN" (2:48) [Conrad BMI] Brother Isaiah's Church of God In Christ Choir, led by the excellent voice of Lorenza Brown, waxes a slow beat inspirational item with stirring results.
C "CLIMBING HIGH MOUNTAINS" (2:45) Lead singers on this side are Jerry Jordan and Clara Mae Stevenson. Tempo is rhythmic and bouncing intended to excite the listener. Does not come up to the par of the reverse side.
REV. JAMES LOFTON
 (Vee-Jay 137)
B "GREAT DAY" Parts 1 and 2 [Conrad BMI—Beatrice Beale] An imposing choir of 250 voices, with solos by Jimmy Mitchell and Mildred Means. A quick beat, syncopated item with thrilling effects. Superb voices and excitement.



VJ-141 "How Can I Let You Go"/ "Why Don't Chu"
 Joe Buckner
 Release Date: BB July 2, 1955



By the middle of 1955, Vee-Jay had moved into their new address at 2129 South Michigan Avenue. The following year, Chess would join them just across the street at 2120.

Owner Vivian Carter wrote an article for *Cash Box's* anniversary issue, pointing out that Rhythm and Blues was just as popular as ever. Indeed, the phenomenal growth of rock-and-roll music was just around the corner. In that article, she thanked *Cash Box* for helping promote the musical genre and announced that one of Vee-Jay's new releases would pay tribute to the magazine.

Rhythm And Blues Has Definitely Not Hit The Skids



by VIVIAN CARTER

Has R&B hit the skids? My answer is a definite "No". In spite of the propaganda to the contrary, one only has to glance at the Hit Parade and you'll find it infested with tunes of R&B origin.

Being a record manufacturer of a small label, we found that that we could sell R&B tunes with consistency, thus enabling us to continue in business.

The growth of the R&B field can be attributed to these factors: 1. The advent of television. When television hit the scene your large advertisers flocked to the new medium, leaving radio stations with time sustaining. 2. The local disc jockey. Radio stations found that the local R&B disc jockey was able to go into the community & sell that sustaining time to local advertisers, thus enabling R&B tunes to be heard. The disc jockey & radio stations encountered much opposition from the very start. The intellectuals immediately voiced disapproval of such music being aired. But the radio station & disc jockey soon learned that it was not the intellectuals who shopped in the bargain basements. The results . . . more R&B. 3. The splendid editorials by *The Cash Box*, which spotlighted R&B tunes in its Hot Charts and alerted the distributors, juke box operators, and disc jockeys about tunes coming up in the trade.

We of Vee-Jay Records would like to pay tribute to *The Cash Box* on its 13th Anniversary by dedicating our latest release entitled "The Cash Box" Vee-Jay 143, by Turk Kincheolos, for the part they've played in the growth of R&B. Happy Anniversary *Cash Box*!



BIG JAY McNEELY ORK
Big Jay's Hop73
 VEE-JAY 142 — McNeely socks across a driving instrumental with a fine danceable beat. (Conrad, BMI)
Three Blind Mice...72
 A showmanly rhythm sid- based on the old nursery rhyme, with an okay group vocal by the boys in the band. (Conrad, BMI)

VJ-142 "Big Jay's Hop"/ "Three Blind Mice"

Big Jay McNeely

Release Date: BB July 23, 1955

Big Jay had just left Federal Records and was on his way to bigger and better things. After recording for Vee-Jay, McNeely performed on stage with Little Richard, Bill Haley, the Clovers, and other rock-and-roll and R&B greats. This led to his biggest hit, "There is Something on Your Mind," in 1959; alas, by that time he had left Vee-Jay.



TURK KINCHELOE'S QUARTET
Modern Trend69
 VEE-JAY 143—A tasteful instrumental treatment of a swingy tune with a nice beat and commendable organ solo work. Both sides are originals by Kincheloe. (Conrad, BMI)
The Cash Box...69
 Same comment. (Conrad, BMI)

VJ-143 "Modern Trend"/ "The Cash Box"

Turk Kincheloe's Quartet

Release Date: BB July 30, 1955

At the time when he recorded for Vee-Jay, Charles Kincheloe Stuart, nicknamed "Turk," was a young jazz pianist who was proving himself to be capable as a writer and a musician. The B-side was his original compositional tribute to the magazine. In 1962, they reissued the song on their Abner subsidiary. By then, Kincheloe was long gone. He had moved first to Jubilee and then to Josie, changed his professional name from Turk to Kirk, and as Kirk Stuart he was playing with Sarah Vaughn and Billie Holliday. Stewart went into semi-retirement and completed an advanced degree in music. He was hired by Howard University, becoming its music director throughout the 1970s. Here he is as a young Turk.



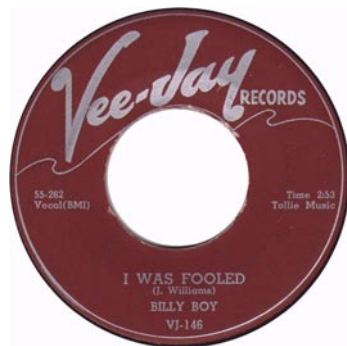


VJ-144 "Zero"/ "Rhythm Punch"
 Julian Dash Combo
 Release Date: BB November 12, 1955



VJ-145 "Romping"/ "Let's Live"
 Dave Shipp's Combo
 Release Date: c. August, 1955

Shipp's combo recorded four songs for Vee-Jay on November 4, 1954. They chose two of his tracks to become a single, but the other two remained in the vault. This was pianist Andrew Hill's first recording.



VJ-146 "I Was Fooled"/ "I Wish You Would"
 Billy Boy
 Release Date: BB June 11, 1955

Billy Arnold is a blues harmonica player who got his start by studying under Sonny Boy Williamson in the late Forties. Sonny Boy is credited with nicknaming Arnold as "Billy Boy." As Arnold was paying his dues in Chicago, Charlie Bennett and Collenane Cosey formed Co-Ben Recording in March, 1953.

NEW RELEASES:

Vee Jay #149 "BAD BOY" b/w "E.T. BLUES"
 Eddie Taylor

Vee Jay #144 "ZERO" b/w
 "RHYTHM PUNCH"
 Julian Dash

Vee Jay #156 "FOOL'S PRAYER" b/w
 "TASTY FREEZE"
 FIVE ECHOS

Vee Jay #159 "LONELY" b/w
 "I'M SO SATISFIED"
 L. C. McKinley

BILLY BOY

I Was Fooled (Tollie, BMI)
 I Wish You Would (Tollie, BMI)—Vee Jay 146—Billy Boy socks over two great Chicago-styled blues sides. The singer displays ace vocal showmanship on both hard-driving spirited tunes underscored by a solid beat. This one should grab off plenty of spins, particularly from boxes.

According to the trade magazines, Co-Ben had two singles ready for release, Herbert Beard's "Luxury Tax Blues"/ "I've Got Rhythm in My Soul" and Bennett's recording of "Half Past Three in the Morning," but neither record appeared at that time. Instead, Co-Ben created Cool Records and released their first single during the second week of July, 1953. That was Herbert Beard's "Gal! You Need a Whippin'"/ "One Half Hour" (Cool 101/102). *Cash Box* reviewed the first single by Billy (boy) Arnold in their August 29, 1953, issue. The singles were mastered by RCA Victor and cut at Universal.

In the September 19th issue of the same magazine, Cool advertised both of their current single and announced the impending release of both of the previously-mentioned records – this time giving "Zig Zag in Love" as the B-side to the Bennett disc.

Alas, the Chicago label was not to succeed. Instead, Arnold went on to Chess, and failed there, but he has the distinction of having played with Bo Diddley. Then it was on to Vee-Jay, who recorded Billy Boy in four sessions in two years and released several of his singles. He continued to play in clubs after that and released an album through Prestige Records.

BILLY (boy) ARNOLD
(Cool 103)
 ● "HELLO STRANGER" (2:42)
 Billy (boy) Arnold sings a slow simple blues effectively. Harmonica in the background helps round out a strong instrumental support.
 ● "I AIN'T GOT NO MONEY" (2:39)
 Flip is a quick beat spirited ditty that comes out the better side. Harmonica gets a bigger play on this end and helps liven the etching. Vocal is ok.



Get COOL with COOL
THE R&B LABEL THAT'S SWEEPING THE NATION!
Billy "Boy" Arnold
 SINGS
"HELLO STRANGER"
 B/W
"AIN'T GOT NO MONEY"
 COOL No. 103



AT MY FRONT DOOR (Tollie, BMI)—The El Dorados—Vee Jay 147
 From time of release, this disk moved out impressively in St. Louis, Chicago and Cleveland. In the past two weeks, equally enthusiastic sales reports have been returned from Baltimore, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Durham, Nashville, Detroit and Boston. Shaping up as a chart threat. Flip is "What's Buggin' You, Baby?" (Tollie, BMI). A previous Billboard "Spotlight" pick.

VJ-147 "At My Front Door"/ "What's Buggin' You, Baby"

The El Dorados

Release Date: BB July 23, 1955

After its initial release, the latest El Dorados single slowly began selling in local markets around the country. This caught the attention of the trade magazines, who reviewed it. It was all over the charts in October, breaking nationally and rising on all three R&B charts. Pat Boone heard it and recorded his own version. As it began to sell, buyers were attracted more to the original by the El Dorados. It rose to #1 on the R&B Juke Boxes chart in January, 1956 – having been also #2 on the R&B Best Sellers in Stores chart. They crossed over to the pop chart, earning the #17 position there.

The label could scarcely handle the demand, with at least five original label printings and one reissue known to exist.



VJ-148 "You Gonna Need Me"/ "Hurt My Feelings"
 Morris Pejoe
 Release Date: BB July 30, 1955



VJ-149 "Bad Boy"/ "ET Blues"
 Eddie Taylor
 Release Date: BB July 30, 1955



VJ-150 "Somewhere to Lay My Head"/ "Pray"
 The Highway Q-Cs
 Release Date: BB July 30, 1955

The Highway QCs began in 1945 as a gospel group who attended the Highway Baptist Church and who all went to Quincy College (high school) in Chicago. Sam Cooke was a member of the group until 1951, and Lou Rawls sang with them from 1951 to 1953. After Johnny Taylor replaced the departing Rawls, they secured a recording contract with Vee-Jay – for whom they recorded for several years. These songs later appeared on their first LP from 1959. Their recording of the A-side came out right after the original by the Nightingales (who were fronted by Julius Cheeks, the song’s author).