

R & B GEMS



TIME  
LIFE  
MUSIC

*The*  
**ROCK'N'ROLL**  
ERA

Digital Remaster

# R & B GEMS

- 1 **The ABC's of Love**  
Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers
- 2 **Leave My Kitten Alone** Little Willie John
- 3 **Nobody but You** Dee Clark
- 4 **I'll Come Running Back to You** Sam Cooke
- 5 **I Love You So** The Chantels
- 6 **Release Me** Esther Phillips
- 7 **Farther Up the Road** Bobby "Blue" Bland
- 8 **Just a Little Bit** Rosco Gordon
- 9 **Fannie Mae** Buster Brown
- 10 **These Arms of Mine** Otis Redding
- 11 **The Love of My Man** Theola Kilgore
- 12 **Over and Over** Bobby Day
- 13 **What About Us** The Coasters
- 14 **Foot Stomping (Part 1)** The Flares
- 15 **Pretty Girls Everywhere**  
Eugene Church and the Fellows
- 16 **Letter Full of Tears**  
Gladys Knight and the Pips
- 17 **To the Aisle** The Five Satins
- 18 **Baby What You Want Me to Do** Jimmy Reed
- 19 **Rainin' in My Heart** Slim Harpo
- 20 **Been So Long** The Pastels
- 21 **I'm a Telling You** Jerry Butler
- 22 **Lovers Never Say Goodbye** The Flamingos

## SEE PROGRAM NOTES INSIDE

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*The*  
**ROCK'N'ROLL**  
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COMPACT  
**disc**  
DIGITAL AUDIO

2RNR-41 TIME  
OPCD-2611 **TIME**  
MUSIC

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*Otis Redding went from R & B obscurity to superstardom in soul.*



## R & B GEMS

People talk about "rhythm and blues" as if it were a single style. One glance at the titles in this collection, though, and it's clear that R & B embraces everything from the sophisticated harmonies of the Flamingos to the raw swamp blues of Slim Harpo. Perhaps the only common element is the virtue of a strong melody.

The vocal-guitar-harmonica combination goes back to the dawn of recorded black music in the '20s, and by the mid-'50s, Slim Harpo had helped bring an electric guitar and drums to the basic mix. James Moore was playing juke joints and country suppers as Harmonica Slim before he discovered that there was another performer by that name. Hastily rechristened "Slim Harpo," Moore started recording at Jay Miller's studio in Crowley, Louisiana, in 1957, finally breaking through in 1961 with **Rainin' in My Heart**.

Buster Brown's **Fannie Mae** worked roughly the same territory as Slim Harpo. Brown was almost 50 years old and scratching out a living as a busboy in a barbecue joint when **Fannie Mae** became his only major hit. The whoops and hollers in his harmonica solo were a legacy of the harp master Sonny Terry.

The blues tradition was updated by Bobby Bland, who began his career in Memphis in 1951 as a chauffeur for Rosco Gordon. Gordon, then riding his first hits, **Booted** and **No More Doggin'**, left Memphis for New York in the mid-'50s but had to wait until 1960 before he returned to the charts with **Just a Little Bit**. Meanwhile, Bobby Bland moved to Houston, teaming up briefly with Johnny Ace. With Joe Scott's punchy horn arrangements behind him, Bland fashioned a style that was a transitional point between blues and gospel-based soul. His first major hit, **Farther Up the Road**, came in 1957.

Two other singers, Sam Cooke and Little Willie John, were part of the transition from blues to soul. Cooke was the lead singer with the gospel Soul Stirrers when he de-

cid-ed to test the pop waters in 1956. Specialty Records boss Art Rupe preferred Cooke's hard-edged gospel style to the "white" chorus that Cooke and his producer, Bumps Blackwell, added to **I'll Come Running Back to You**. Blackwell asked Rupe if he could buy Cooke's contract with some money owed to him from a Little Richard session. Rupe agreed, and Blackwell placed Sam Cooke with Keen Records, for whom he had an immediate smash with **You Send Me**. Rupe quickly rushed **I'll Come Running Back** onto the market, and it became Cooke's second hit.

Cooke was murdered at the age of 29, but the case of Little Willie John was sadder by far. Born in Arkansas in 1937 and raised in Detroit, Willie spent three years trying to get a contract with the Cincinnati-based King label. His sexually allusive **Leave My Kitten Alone** crashed the charts in 1959 and did well again in 1961 in the wake of Johnny Preston's revival. Willie John suffered from psychological problems, though, aggravated by alcohol. In 1966 he stabbed a man in a Seattle barroom brawl, and he died two years later in Washington State Penitentiary.

Close harmony vocal groups drew upon entirely different traditions from the blues and gospel shouters. Among the most urbane groups were the Flamingos, formed in Chicago by several members of the black Jewish faith. The solemn religious music they absorbed growing up is generally credited with influencing their style, which had none of the passion usually associated with gospel-based singers. The group had been performing for some seven years when they signed with End Records in New York. **Lovers Never Say Goodbye**, a hit in 1959, set the stage for their follow-up, the classic **I Only Have Eyes for You**.

The Five Satins and the Pastels worked a similar terrain. The Satins were founded by Freddy Parris, who assembled the group in New Haven, Connecticut, while on weekend passes from the army. They cut **In the Still of the Nite** in a

church basement there, and it was issued on the tiny Standord label in 1956. After it started selling well locally, Ember Records bought the master and made it into a nationwide hit. By that point, Parris was stationed in Japan, and Bill Baker was brought in to sing the lead on **To the Aisle**, which became their second—and last—major hit. The arrangement was by Leroy Kirkland, who gave the bassoon one of its rare R & B outings.

The Pastels didn't form in the Bronx or Chicago's South Side but in Greenland. The four servicemen led by DiFosco Ervin won some Air Force talent shows and recorded **Been So Long** for Mascot in 1957 after their return to the States. As with the Satins, the smaller label was unable to handle the demand and leased the master to a bigger label. Unable to score another hit, the Pastels broke up in 1959, but Ervin renamed himself Big Dee Irwin and had a hit in 1963 with *Swinging on a Star*.

For sheer novelty, though, no group could touch Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers. Lymon was 13 years old when *Why Do Fools Fall in Love* hit. The Teenagers had been singing together in Washington Heights, New York, before they were joined by Lymon, who was a couple of years younger than the others. Richard Barrett of the Valentines brought them to George Goldner at Gee Records, where their flame burned brightly for just over a year.

**The ABC's of Love** was their next-to-last hit. There were worldwide tours, television shows and two movies before the party ended. Lymon went solo in 1957, but his career went downhill. With a string of drug arrests behind him, he entered the army in 1966 and died of an overdose while on weekend leave in New York in 1968.

There was a happier ending for the Chantels. The group members were trained vocalists who sang in a Catholic church and secretly wanted to do rhythm and blues. One day they saw Richard Barrett walking down 42nd Street in New York and auditioned on the sidewalk. When he didn't call, they found his home phone number and pestered him



Bobby "Blue"  
first of several

*Blind from Rosemark, Tennessee, had the decades worth of hits in 1957.*



until he took them into the studio. Their first record, *Maybe*, was a smash at the beginning of 1958, and it was followed by *Every Night (I Pray)* and *I Love You So* later in the year. After the hits stopped, lead singer Arlene Smith resumed her studies, eventually becoming a teacher of art and design in New York.

The Coasters took a different slant on the R & B vocal-group tradition. They were essentially puppets in the hands of producers Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, who wrote little playlets specifically for them. Born out of the Robins, a West Coast group that ended up on the short-lived Spark label, the Coasters hit their stride in 1957 with *Searchin'*. **What About Us** exemplifies the refined wit and hint of social commentary—uncommon at that time—in Leiber and Stoller's writing for the group.

In the early '60s, Esther Phillips explored one musical backwater that Ray Charles had made his own: covers of country songs. Setting soulful vocals against a sweet backdrop of strings and choruses worked for Charles and it worked briefly for Phillips. **Release Me** (a hit for Jimmy Heap and Ray Price in 1954) marked her return to the charts after a 10-year hiatus. Produced by Kenny Rogers' brother, Lelan, it laid the groundwork for Esther's return to form in jazz and soul.

It was the music of Otis Redding that pointed toward the future, though. In October 1962 Otis was working as a valet, chauffeur and front man for Atlanta bandleader Johnny Jenkins, and he drove Jenkins to Stax in Memphis for a session that month. With 20 minutes remaining at the end of the session, Redding got a chance to record. Sounding nervous and a little tentative, he sang **These Arms of Mine**, with guitarist Steve Cropper playing piano and Jenkins playing guitar. Released in December, the song took three months to make its brief appearance on the charts.

By the time Otis cut *Mr. Pitiful* and *I've Been Loving You Too Long* two years later, black music had changed. The gospel progressions and slow-burning edginess that make

*These Arms* so compelling set the stage for much of what happened in R & B during the 1960s. But the innocence—bordering on naïveté—of some of these songs never returned.

—Colin Escott

*The foot-stomping Flares*





## DISCOGRAPHY

\*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

- 1. The ABC's of Love** Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers • Music and lyrics by George Goldner and Richard Barrett. *See 1022 (1956)*. Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. No. 8 (R & B)\*
- 2. Leave My Kitten Alone** Little Willie John • Music and lyrics by Tulus Turner, James McDougal and Willie John. *King 5219 (1959)*. Courtesy of Gusto Records. No. 13 (R & B)\*
- 3. Nobody but You** Dee Clark • Music and lyrics by Dee Clark. *Abner 1019 (1958)*. Courtesy of Vee-Jay Records. No. 3 (R & B)\*
- 4. I'll Come Running Back to You** Sam Cooke • Music and lyrics by William S. Cook. *Specialty 619 (1957)*. Courtesy of Specialty Records. No. 1 (R & B)\*
- 5. I Love You So** The Chantels • Music and lyrics by Morris Levy and Sonny Norton. *End 1020 (1958)*. Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. No. 14 (R & B)\*
- 6. Release Me** Esther Phillips • Music and lyrics by William McCall, Robert Young and Eddie Miller. *Lenox 5555 (1962)*. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 1 (R & B)\*
- 7. Farther Up the Road** Bobby 'Blow' Bland • Music and lyrics by Joe Veasey and Don Robey. *Duke 170 (1957)*. © 1973 MCA Records, Inc. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 1 (R & B)\*
- 8. Just a Little Bit** Rosco Gordon • Music and lyrics by Del Gordon. *Vee-Jay 332 (1960)*. Courtesy of Vee-Jay Records. No. 2 (R & B)\*
- 9. Fannie Mae** Buster Brown • Music and lyrics by Waymon Glasco. *Fire 1008 (1960)*. Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. No. 1 (R & B)\*
- 10. These Arms of Mine** Otis Redding • Music and lyrics by Otis Redding. *Vol 103 (1963)*. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 20 (R & B)\*
- 11. The Love of My Man** Theola Kilgore • Music and lyrics by Ed Townsend. *Sernick 2004 (1963)*. Courtesy of Gusto Records. No. 3 (R & B)\*
- 12. Over and Over** Bobby Day • Music and lyrics by Robert Byrd. *Class 229 (1958)*. Courtesy of Sid Talmadge. No. 41\*
- 13. What About Us** The Coasters • Music and lyrics by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. *Alco 5153 (1960)*. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 17 (R & B)\*
- 14. Foot Stomping (Part 1)** The Flares • Music and lyrics by Aaron Collins Jr. *Felsted 8624 (1961)*. Courtesy of Antler Records. No. 20 (R & B)\*
- 15. Pretty Girls Everywhere** Eugene Church and the Fellows • Music and lyrics by Eugene Church and Thomas Williams. *Class 235 (1958)*. Courtesy of Sid Talmadge. No. 6 (R & B)\*
- 16. Letter Full of Tears** Gladys Knight and the Pips • Music and lyrics by Don Covay. *Fury 1054 (1961)*. Produced under license from Arista Records, Inc. No. 3 (R & B)\*
- 17. To the Alamo** The Five Satins • Music and lyrics by Billy Dawn Smith and Stuart Wiener. *Ember 1019 (1957)*. Produced under license from Arista Records, Inc. No. 5 (R & B)\*
- 18. Baby What You Want Me to Do** Jimmy Reed • Music and lyrics by Jimmy Reed. *Vee-Jay 333 (1960)*. Courtesy of Vee-Jay Records. No. 10 (R & B)\*
- 19. Ralala! in My Heart** Slim Harpo • Music and lyrics by James Moore and Jerry West. *Excella 2194 (1961)*. Courtesy of AVI Records. No. 17 (R & B)\*
- 20. Been So Long** The Pastels • Music and lyrics by DiFasco Erwin, Richard Travis Jr., James B. Willingham and Anthony Thomas. *Argo 5287 (1958)*. Courtesy of Chess/MCA Records, Inc. No. 4 (R & B)\*
- 21. I'm a Telling You** Jerry Butler • Music and lyrics by Jerry Butler and Curtis Mayfield. *Vee-Jay 390 (1961)*. Courtesy of Vee-Jay Records. No. 8 (R & B)\*
- 22. Lovers Never Say Goodbye** The Flamingos • Music and lyrics by Terry Johnson and Paul Wilson. *End 1035 (1959)*. Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. No. 25 (R & B)\*

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The Flamingos



## NOTES INSIDE

**Chairman:** Paul R. Stewart  
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**Vice President:** Fernando Pargas  
**Executive Producer:** Charles McCardell  
**Recording Producers:** Joe Sasfy, Steve Carr  
**Creative Director:** Robin Bray  
**Associate Producer:** Brian Miller  
**Art Studio:** Nina Bridges  
**Series Consultant:** Joe Sasfy  
**Chief Financial Officer:** Eric R. Eaton  
**Associate Director of Production:** Karen Hill

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