

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

A Personal Recollection by Cedric J. Hayes

Cedric Hayes takes us through his voyage of discovery into a parallel universe within black music. As early rhythm and blues flirted with gospel influences in the late 1950s, soul stylings shaped gospel trends in the coming decades.

It all started back in 1959. Prior to that time my collecting interests were mainly jazz, and I had also just become interested in blues. I had also become interested in discography, although at that time it was still a passive interest. During my national service in the British forces I had been introduced to *Vintage Jazz Mart* (or 'The Yellow Peril' as the proprietor Trevor Benwell termed it), a vehicle for the sale of jazz records, but also with a large number of blues records among the auction/sales lists. Coming towards the end of my conscription period, I purchased a number of records from one particular advertisement, amongst which was the record that was to change my collecting habits, and provide me with a hobby for life.

This record was a twelve inch album of dubbings from a number of gospel records, both pre- and post-1943. I would like to say that it provided my 'Damascus' moment, but unlike Saul, I didn't immediately see the light. I had previously only heard the likes of Blind Willie Johnson, Reverend Gary Davis, Mahalia Jackson, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Marie Knight, and at that time none had made any significant impact. This record was different.

In addition to singer/guitarists such as Reverend Edward Clayborn, it also contained preacher and congregations, and, more importantly, some quartets. Having been brought up, firstly as a child in Sunday School, and then as a youth in a small Church Of England parish church, this music was totally different to what I was used to hearing, and though exciting, took some getting used to.

Over a period of several months I gradually adjusted to these new sounds, and became determined to learn more (and, of course, to hear more).

I soon found this was not an easy task. At that time, there were very few articles on gospel music and its practitioners, and these were mostly in obscure and long out-of-print books and magazines. Similarly, it was almost as difficult to obtain, not only information on recordings, but the records in question, because of currency restrictions then in force. However, I persevered and found that two ready sources of data were the various volumes of 'Jazz Directory' (which despite its name also included blues and gospel discographies), and Stanley Dance's 'Recent American Records' column in *Jazz Journal*. Later, *Record Research* published *Blues Research*, which consisted of listings of record labels, many of which included gospel records in their output; the highlight was issue six, which was given over entirely to gospel labels.

So I began to compile a discography of sorts, by artist, in alphabetical order, and the first two links in the chain were forged. A third link soon followed.

The Blues Appreciation Society had originally been formed by a number of blues researchers/collectors, but pressure of work had meant it laying dormant for some time. Then Mike Leadbitter was given permission to use the name, and this was when I joined. Shortly afterwards, Mike gained space in the Swiss magazine *Jazz Statistics* for a blues discographical column, and he kindly gave me a page to include gospel data.

Later, the BAS decided to publish their own magazine, and *Blues Unlimited* was born. The editors at that time were Mike Leadbitter, Simon Napier and John Broven, and they very kindly allowed me space for gospel.

In issue three (July, 1963) began 'The Post War Gospel Records' column, which was the direct forerunner of the previous books, and thus this volume. This column, with a large gap between 1970 and 1976, continued until the last issue of *Blues Unlimited*. It was during this time that the final link was forged, when, in 1968, Bob Laughton sent me a batch of information for the column. We quickly realised we had much in common, although we had come to gospel

by very different routes, and began to exchange data, etc., and so began the collaboration that finally led to 'Gospel Records, 1943-1969'.

Over the years, many collectors sent in information, and eventually Bob was able to input everything onto computer. From that time on Bob kept the project going as we concentrated on the period between 1943-1969 (and later to 1970). In the meantime I had never ceased to file away all the data on gospel records from 1943 onwards, even as we passed through the 1970s into the 1980s and on.

At the time this was little more than keeping my hobby going, with no thought that one day it would ever be feasible to publish it in book form, and no real effort was made to obtain information from other collectors.

I was fortunate in that collectors who were helping us with the earlier part also had large collections of the later period, and they helped me build up a database. So my thanks go to Michael and Maureen Quinlan and to Robert Sacre. Later on, in the mid to late 1980s and early 1990s, I had a great deal of help from two French collectors, Lionel Decoster and Jean Lacomme, and also from Owen KenKnight from the United States, who sent huge amounts of data from their collections, including much information on what came to be called 'Contemporary Christian' or 'Inspirational Gospel'. Then at the beginning of this century another jazz collector who was bitten by the gospel bug, Victor Schonfield, from the UK, contacted me and ever since has been a constant source of information.

Like all music, gospel has evolved over the years. From the studied harmonies of the Fisk University groups who carried the spirituals all over the USA and then Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the community based groups of the 1920s was perhaps not such a big change, but from there to the hard quartets of the 1940s and early-mid 1950s was a much bigger leap.

At the same time the gospel songs being written by Thomas A. Dorsey, with their legacy of his blues past in their harmonies, were to inspire a different sound in the churches, and the groups who came from the churches, and this sound was reflected in the recordings of the 1940s and 1950s, a period usually referred to as 'The Golden Age Of Gospel'.

By the 1960s, a new sound was making its way onto record as, in place of the acappella quartets, or groups with a minimal accompaniment, full rhythm sections were being used, including the use of one or more guitars and bass guitar. By the late 1960s, a younger element was beginning to take over the gospel scene from the more traditional groups, appealing to a younger audience. As always keeping up to date and influenced by current soul stylings, came yet another change in the accompaniment, as more electronic instrumentation were used. Following the publication of 'The Gospel Discography, 1943-1970', and once the publisher realised that a basis for a further volume existed, we were asked if we would be prepared to work on a volume covering the years 1971-2000, which we

agreed to. This meant extra work as two different methods of entering the data had been used.

Having resolved these problems, draft discographies were circulated among collectors and researchers. Several collectors of 1970s and 1980s gospel records promised to help and just as we were getting ready to submit the manuscript to the publisher the goal posts were moved. We were asked if we would be prepared to combine the two books and work on the period 1943 - 2000.

As will be noticed, many records are undated, even by a 'circa' date. By combining the two books, we were able to include in one volume all these records.

The extra help that we were able to receive has meant that the coverage of releases between 1971 and 2000 has been greatly expanded, whilst there have also been extensive additions to the earlier period of 1943 - 1970.

Nevertheless, there is still much to learn about recordings between the years covered, so this book is by no means claiming to be a complete discography of the period.

'The Gospel Discography' 3rd Edition Volume One (A to O) ISBN 978-0-9866417-6-3; 'The Gospel Discography' 3rd Edition Volume Two (P to Z, indices) ISBN 978-0-9866417-7-0 are now available from Eyeball Productions: www.eyeballproductions.com

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