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The Stratfords

# ECHOES OF THE PAST



Nay Plays  
The Groups

Larry Stidom's  
Record Report

In This Issue: Everglades/Ebb Tides, Stratfords, Teddy & the Twilights, High Seas,  
Billy Dawn Smith, and much more.....

**“Teddy & the Twilights” by Charlie Horner & Steve Applebaum  
Reprinted with permission from *Echoes of the Past*, Issue #96 (2011)**

# **TEDDY & THE TWILIGHTS**

**by Charlie Horner & Steve Applebaum**  
**With Contributions from Pamela Horner**  
**Dedicated to the memory of Steve Applebaum**  
**Updated from 1977 article in *Yesterday's Memories***

In 1948 a young group from Baltimore pioneered a new sound in black music that would soon be called Rhythm & Blues. Throughout America's inner cities, vocal groups sprang up on nearly every corner in response to Sonny Til and The Orioles. In Philadelphia one such group was led by Leonard "Lord Galley" Lewis, himself a native of Baltimore. Leonard was backed by John Odoms [also known as John Williams], Benjamin Hart, and someone remembered only as John. By 1950, the group was playing local clubs, but soon after, a death in his family called "Lord Galley" back to Baltimore. When he decided to remain in Baltimore, the group disbanded.

They were not silent long. 1951 saw the rise of The Dominoes and the re-inspiration of black vocal groups everywhere. John Odoms formed a new group, asking his younger step-brother, Larry Williams, to sing lead. The brothers grew up in South Philadelphia and attended Franklin High School. As a youngster, Larry remembered R&B groups appearing at the Lincoln Theater, at Broad and Lombard Streets. The new group became Larry Williams (lead), John Odoms (tenor), Wilbur Turner (baritone) and Ben Hart (bass). The group idolized and patterned themselves after The Dominoes, whom they'd seen several times at the old Earle Theater. In the early days, the group had many names including The Vibrinaires and The Parakeets, but never recorded under those names.

During the early 1950's, the group underwent numerous personnel changes. Larry Williams found singing lead too strenuous and gladly switched to harmony when Leonard Lewis returned from Baltimore. Wilbur Turner left and, for a while, the group consisted of Leonard Lewis (lead), John Odoms (first tenor), Larry Williams (second tenor and baritone) and Benjamin Hart (bass). Larry would often sing a split part - in other words, some parts of a song he would sing as a tenor and then switch to baritone. In 1952, Larry met members of The Royals at the Earle Theatre. Dinah Washington was also on the bill. One of The Royals was about to go into the service and the group was looking for a replacement. At that time, Larry had a very high tenor voice and this is what The Royals were seeking. They asked Larry if he would join them and he initially agreed, but was later talked out of it by members of his own group.

Throughout the early 1950's, the group played local clubs such as the Two Bit Club on 16th and Fitzwater, the Northwest Club and the VPA in North Philadelphia, and quite a few others. During the early years the group never recorded, partially because they saw so many other groups getting ripped off by record companies.

As Larry put it, "We didn't want to get hung up in a contract, one of these life-long things where we would eat mustard buns and the rest of the guys eat steaks so we were real cautious about this. If there was something in the contract we didn't understand, we wanted to see a lawyer, and a lot of the time the people would forget about us all together."

The group did have out of town gigs in Atlantic City and New York, where they played places like The Brass Rail.

The group went through a critical period when Leonard Lewis quit. During this time they had a succession of four or five different leads. At one time, they had a girl, Mattie Davis, singing lead. They became associated with Van Walls,



**Teddy & The Twilights, 1962. Top: Fred Cohen.  
Bottom (L to R): Larry Williams, John Odoms, Ben Hart  
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)**

who played piano on many of the *Atlantic* recordings of such artists as The Clovers, Ruth Brown, and Joe Turner. Van Walls almost landed them a recording contract with *Atlantic Records*. *Atlantic*, however, wanted them to get rid of the female lead and sing blues. Since Larry didn't want to go back to lead, no other lead could be found, and the group didn't want to sing blues, they passed up *Atlantic's* offer.

Sometime around 1953, the group acquired Sam Connors as lead. It was also then that the group started using the name, The Deckers. In 1954, Larry Williams entered the army and was replaced by Curtis Barnes.

At this point, the Deckers' history becomes unclear. Benjamin Hart began singing with another vocal group, which coincidentally (or maybe not) was also named The Parakeets. This group originally consisted of Ernest "Ernie" Banks (lead); future member of The Silhouettes, Rick Lewis (tenor); and future members of The Turbans, James "Tony" Jenkins (tenor) and Andrew "Chet" Jones (bass). When Andrew Jones left to form The Turbans in 1954, Benjamin Hart stepped in as bass. The Parakeets then joined a tour of the United States and Canada, singing at carnivals, state fairs, clubs and thea-

ters. In the Fall of 1955, The Parakeets abandoned the tour and disbanded as a group. Rick Lewis became the road manager of The Turbans who had by then scored with the single, "When You Dance". James Jenkins joined a Philly gospel group called The Gospel Tornados. Eventually, Rick Lewis would replace James Jenkins in The Gospel Tornados and the group would become The Silhouettes of "Get A Job" fame. Jenkins would later sing with The Turbans. As for Benjamin Hart, he returned to The Deckers.

When Larry Williams came out of the army in 1957, he also rejoined The Deckers, who now consisted of Sam Connors, John Odoms, Larry Williams, Curtis Barnes and Ben Hart. Larry Williams spent the next three or four months learning the group's new material.

The Deckers appeared on *Ted Mack's Amateur Hour TV Show*, in 1957. Due to a misunderstanding, they showed up at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and missed most of the rehearsals which started at 10 o'clock that morning. This was only a preview of things to come, for on the show, they were beaten out by a troupe of Irish dancers.

The Deckers' first recording came about in 1957 when the group was asked to back up a young white singer, Lynn Christie, on the *NAR* label. Christie was a 21 year old night club singer who was singing at the Latin Quarter in New York City when she signed with the *NAR* label in December 1956. *NAR* was owned by Demetrios Chios and Joseph Spinelli who had previously recorded the Philadelphia instrumental group, The Points and singer Toni Taylor. Both Chios and Spinelli lived in the Philadelphia suburb of Narbeth, PA, hence the label, *NAR*. *NAR* had offices in Philly and New York City.

Lynn Christie's earlier *NAR* recording, "Moon Madness" b/w "Why Am I Afraid And Blue" (*NAR* 524/523) failed to generate sales so Spinelli decided to use vocal group backing on her next recording.

The first night that The Deckers went out to Narberth for rehearsals was the night Floyd Patterson knocked out Hurricane Jackson (July 29, 1957). They rehearsed until the fight came on, stopped to watch the fight, and then completed rehearsals. When the group went to the studio to record "Oh Where Did You Go," they were clowning around and Larry started singing in falsetto. Producer Joe Spinelli said to try it that way and since they had the studio booked for the night, they kept trying different ways. The end result sounded nothing like the way the record was rehearsed. "Oh Where Did You Go" b/w "What Did I Do" (*NAR* 225) came out in the summer of 1957 and featured some fine backup harmony, especially on the A-side, "Oh Where Did You Go".

Shortly after the *NAR* recording, Curtis Barnes left The Deckers to join a spiritual group. By this time Larry Williams was completely familiar with the group's material and took over Curtis' part.

Throughout this time The Deckers were kept busy playing dances and clubs. They sang a mix of the current popular songs. The Deckers at one time had a repertoire of about 135 songs. They used to begin rehearsals around 7 PM and run through that night's songs, making any last minute changes they thought necessary. With so many songs in their repertoire, for variety Larry and Ben would occasionally take the lead on songs that were compatible with their voice ranges. John rarely sang lead as he was more suited to singing harmony. Larry recalled one night at a dinner dance in Trenton, when the group indulged freely in drinks. Larry was supposed to lead the group on the Elvis standard, "Teddy Bear," but started the song off too low. Part-way through the song he realized he couldn't make the low parts so he stopped singing but kept working his mouth. Everyone thought his microphone went off. They could hear the band and the harmony part, but not the lead.

Throughout these years, The Deckers thought several times of recording, but could not find the right deal. The Deckers preferred not recording to recording under a bad contract. They talked to other groups about prospective companies and they talked to lawyers about prospective contracts. While their caution kept record company owners from getting rich on Deckers' royalties, it also kept The Deckers from recording.

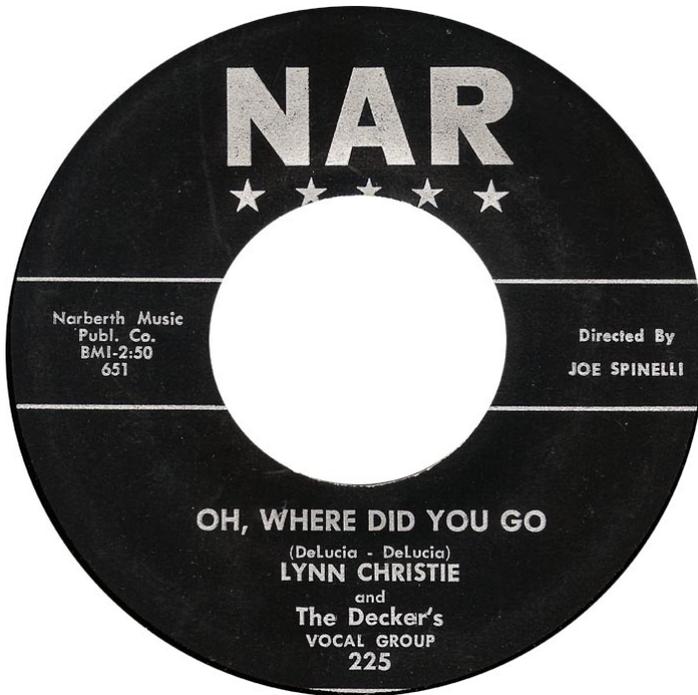
Through Sam Connors, the group met Jack Green. Jack knew much about jukeboxes but little about record promotion. He was, however, willing to put up his money to take a chance. The Deckers had a ballad called "Sincerely With All My Heart." Being cautious, the group discussed the situation for about two months before signing with Jack Green. Jack formed the *Yeardon* label and "Sincerely With All My Heart" became its first release. The recording session was held at Reco-Arts Studio, 212 North 12th Street, in downtown Philadelphia. The whole recording session, including violins and rhythm section, cost less than \$200.00. At least four sides were recorded, including "Sincerely With All My Heart," "Come Back Baby," "The Thing" [a remake of the 1950 Phil Harris novelty] and "Love What Have You Done". The up-tempo "Come Back Baby" was chosen as the flip for "Sincerely With All My Heart".

Trouble developed almost immediately. Since Jack Green was not familiar with record promotion, the group tried to explain it to him. When he saw how much money it was going to cost to put the record out on the street, however, Jack tightened the purse strings. The Deckers tried to take the record around to DJ's for air play, only to find they needed money for payola. They were, however, able to get their record played on WIBG (the leading R&R station in Philadelphia) a few times, by playing record hops for a couple of WIBG DJ's. Since the records played on WIBG were controlled by a program director, they could get little more. "Sincerely With All My Heart" was re-released a short time later with a novelty flip - "The Thing". A third release of the record, again with "The Thing" as the flip side, listed the publisher as *Angel* which might indicate the record was distributed by *Herald-Ember*.

Throughout the late 1950's, The Deckers were constantly trying to improve themselves. They were looking for fresh ideas to come up with a winner. One area in need of improvement was their lead. Sam Connors would sometimes change key in the middle of a song. The group would try to cover up for him but it made them sound bad. For the good of the group, the rest of The Deckers began looking for another lead. For a short while they were sneaking in rehearsals with Russell Carter (former lead of The Cherokees on *Grand*), without Sam's knowledge. The group considered returning Larry to the lead, but didn't want to blow their harmony. John, Ben, and Larry had been singing together for so long that each could "feel" what the others were going to do. They had their harmony down to perfection.

In 1958, The Deckers met Jackie Wilson who had recently left The Dominoes and had just recorded "Lonely Teardrops". [The group may have been thinking of Jackie's first Brunswick release, "Reet Petite" - ed.] Unsure of his success as a single artist, Jackie made a "deal" with The Deckers. Jackie told them that if "Lonely Teardrops" took off, he'd continue as a single artist, but if "Sincerely With All My Heart" took off, he would become the new lead of The Deckers. Whether or not Jackie Wilson was joking with the group, "Lonely Teardrops" was a huge success while "Sincerely With All My Heart" did nothing.

In the early 1960's, The Deckers changed their name to the Buddies and signed with Doc Bagby (*Red Top* and *Value* labels). Larry's and John's brother, Charles Williams was



The Deckers first record backing Lynn Christie, 1957.  
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)

Deckers' "Sincerely With All My Heart," First Press  
(#101) Original flip side was "Come Back Baby"  
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



Original flip side to "Sincerely With All My Heart" was  
"Come Back Baby". It was later replaced by "The Thing".  
(Courtesy of Val Shively, R&B Records)

Third release of "Sincerely With All My Heart" with label  
# 1041 and publisher "Angel Music". Flip side was "The  
Thing".  
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



**The Buddies backing Freddie Cannon, 1961  
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)**

already singing with one of Doc Bagby's groups, The Mohawks ("Bewitched, Bothered And Bewildered" b/w "I Got A Gal" - *Val-ue* 211). [Charles Williams is not the same Charlie Williams who sang with *The Turbans*—ed.] Doc Bagby's labels folded, however, before the Buddies could record. Doc contacted Frank Slay over at *Swan Records*, and The Buddies moved to that label.

The first thing the Buddies did on *Swan* was back up Freddy Cannon on "Buzz Buzz A Diddle It" (*Swan* 4071). The record debuted on the Pop Charts in May 1961, reaching #51. During this time, *Swan* was looking for material for The Buddies to record.

The first recordings the Buddies did on their own were novelty tunes. As Larry recalled, Eddie Bo was rehearsing a song called "The Spooky Spider". *Swan* had the Buddies record it and their version was released in 1961.

The Buddies were not satisfied singing novelty songs and back-up. They wanted a chance to do ballads and show off their harmony. When *Swan* kept stalling and handed The Buddies another novelty tune, the group didn't want to do it. John, Larry and Ben went to Frank Slay and asked why they were getting stuck with novelties. Frank Slay replied that their lead, Sam Connors, didn't have the voice for ballads. John, Larry and Ben decided that for the good of the group, they would have to let Sam go and find another lead. They asked Sam to sign releases from the contracts but Sam refused. Fortunately, the group's contract with *Swan* included a clause that said anything not covered by the existing contract could be added later. They added a clause that said if a member of the group was absent, their road manager, Skip Johnson, could sign anything in his place. They had this clause notarized, Skip signed the releases, and Sam was out.

Fred Cohen, a friend of the group who formerly sang with Larry and John's brother's group, The Mohawks, had wanted to join the Buddies for some time.

The Mohawks started as a street corner group in South Philly. Before recording they sang at skating rinks and local talent shows. "We didn't make a lot of money," said Fred

Cohen. "On the street corner you had a lot of groups. Every corner had a group."

The Mohawks were together for three or four years before recording. The group went through many personnel changes. Eventually, the personnel stabilized at Richard Tabron (lead, tenor), Fred Cohen (lead, tenor), Andrew "Sonny" Adams (baritone), Charles "Charlie Boy" Williams (second tenor) and Everett "Buzzy" Kilpatrick (bass).

The Mohawks were eventually signed by organist and Philly music icon, Doc Bagby in 1960. Bagby co-owned the *Val-ue* label with Felix Valdera (of Paramount Record stores) and was looking for new artists to record. The Mohawks were supposed to audition for someone else. "We went to an interview and got the address mixed up," recalled Fred. "We went to the wrong address and Doc Bagby liked us. We sang 'Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered' and Doc Bagby liked the new arrangement we did. He gave us another tune to record for the flip side. That was 'I Got A Gal'. We made our own arrangement and he liked that better. That was supposed to be the A-side."

"I Got A Gal" was written by John Ivy and had been recorded before by Philly's own Ivy Tones under the title "Oo Wee Baby" (*Red Top* #105). Since Bagby was connected to *Red Top Records*, it was natural he was still trying to make the song a hit. The Mohawks version was so different it was barely resembled the original version. "I knew a member of the Ivy Tones," said Fred, "And when we recorded it he didn't know it was his song. I sang lead on that song. Richard Taybron sang lead on 'Bewitched...'"

"It took about 13 or 14 takes for "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered" and we did "I Got A Gal" in two or three takes," said Fred. "We recorded a couple more sides that never came out."

While "Bewitched" sold locally, it never broke nationally. Within six months of the *Val-ue* release, Fred left the group to get married. The original Mohawks broke up. Some of the other Mohawks continued to sing.

Fred Cohen did not stay out of music for long before



**The Buddies' "Spooky Spider," 1961  
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)**

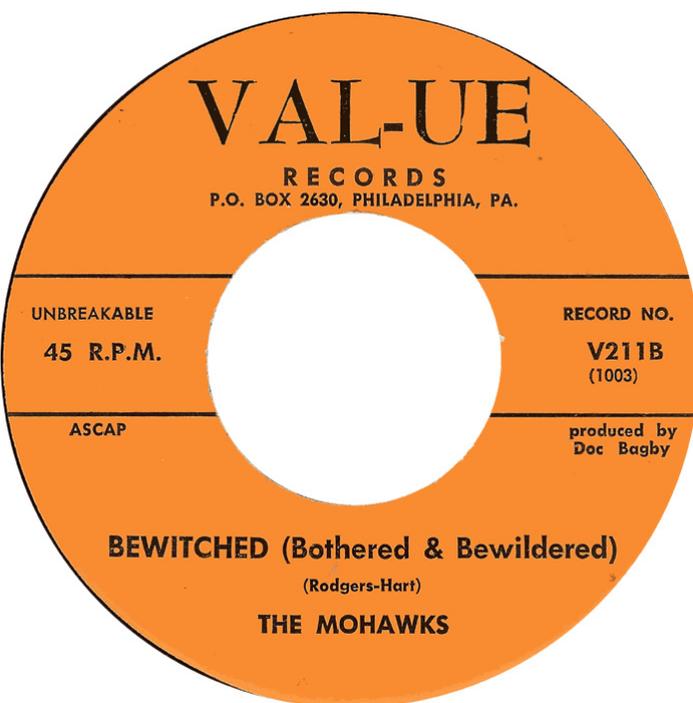
joining the Buddies as lead. "I thought we [The Mohawks] were the best group on the street corners," said Fred, "But the Buddies were the best in the clubs. I always wanted to sing with them. After I left The Mohawks they contacted me. We did a couple of tunes together and we sounded pretty good."

Fred brought with him, Gerald "Dickie" Smith who became the group's personal guitar player and Joe "Boobie" Thomas who became their Fender bass guitar player. On occasions when Gerald Smith missed gigs, Joe Thomas would put down his Fender bass, pick up somebody's guitar, and fill in for Dickie. The group now consisted of Fred Cohen, John Williams, Larry Williams and Ben Hart.

Early in 1962, the Buddies were at the Paradise Club at 16th and Fitzwater, when a vocal group from Baltimore called The Blenders was playing. They did an original number called "The Pleasure Of Love" and The Buddies were impressed. They went backstage after the performance and found that the song was written by two members of The Blenders, Earl Washington (the guitarist) and Melvin Brown. Since the Blenders were staying over, they got together with The Buddies, talked, and finally gave The Buddies the lead sheet to "Pleasure Of Love". The Buddies quickly learned the tune. A short time later, Larry and a secretary from *Swan*, remembered only as Sherman, traveled to Baltimore and got Earl Washington to sign a release, clearing the way for the Buddies to record "Pleasure Of Love".

In March of 1962, The Buddies went into the studio and cut four songs. Bernard Bennick and Tony Mammarella, the owners of *Swan*, decided The Buddies should have a new name to go along with their new lead and style. They gave the group two different names and issued a record under each at approximately the same time. Future releases would carry the name of the most successful of these two records.

"Woman Is A Man's Best Friend," a soul record written by Fred Cohen, was backed with a pretty doo wop-flavored ballad, written by Gerald Smith, entitled "Goodbye To Love". This record listed the group as Teddy and The Twilights. Two



The Mohawks, "Bewitched, Bothered And Bewildered," 1960. First press has Reco Arts in deadwax. (From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



(top to bottom): Mohawks' Richard Tabron with L.A. Moore and Robert Murphy in *Neighbors Complaint*, ca. 1990's. (Photo courtesy of Robert Murphy).

weeks later, *Swan* issued a soul-novelty tune called "Atlanta" and backed it with "Pleasure Of Love". The group was listed as The Tiffanies. "Pleasure Of Love" featured Fred Cohen and Larry Williams in a duet-style lead, backed by John and Ben. These records were recorded at Reco-Arts. In those days there was very little overdubbing. The rhythm section consisted of a guitar, bass, drums, piano and maybe a sax. On "Goodbye To Love" strings were overdubbed later.

"Atlanta" sold a little in Georgia but did nothing else. "Woman..." on the other hand, was a success. It broke first in Pittsburgh and then all over the Eastern Coast. Georgie Woods broke it in Philadelphia. It sold 40 or 50 thousand copies and reached numbers 59 and 53 on *Billboard's* and *Cash Box's* pop lists, respectively. It did on its own, because *Swan* gave it very little promotion. Most of *Swan's* promotion at that time was tied up with Freddy Cannon.

Thus, with the success of "Woman...", the group became known as Teddy and The Twilights. Fred Cohen sang lead on all of The Twilights' recordings. All recordings were arranged by Walter Gates, another *Swan* artist and staff member. "As an arranger," recalled Fred Cohen, "Walter Gates was the best in the business!"

In the spring of 1962, Teddy and The Twilights appeared on *American Bandstand*. Dick Clark scheduled them for Easter Monday and started playing their record a couple of weeks before that, to familiarize his audience with them. At the last minute, however, Dinah Washington made a surprise appearance and The Twilights were postponed until the next day. They sang their hit, "Woman Is A Man's Best Friend".

*Swan* often utilized Teddy & The Twilights to vocally back their soloists. In addition, Fred Cohen often wrote or co-wrote songs for other *Swan* artists.

On one occasion, Frank Slay asked Fred Cohen to write a song about the then popular TV doctor show, *Ben Casey*. The song was given to South Philly artist, Brenda John-



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# "BIMINI BIMBO DOIN' THE LIMBO"

by

## TEDDY and the TWILIGHTS

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son to record. Teddy & the Twilights backed Brenda on both sides of the record; the novelty "Ben Casey" and the ballad "If I Give My Love To You" (*Swan* 4108). Frank Slay then contacted the producers of the TV show, who didn't like the song, and the record was pulled from the release schedule. Fred believes the record was never released and we've never seen a copy. However, mp3's of both sides are now available by download on the Internet from the original tapes.

Teddy & The Twilights also backed Esau Isaac on "Every Woman's Just The Same" b/w "Poison Pen" (*Swan* 4110). Esau Isaac and Fred Cohen penned both sides. Esau also recorded for the *Melron* label (as Essau) as well as for the *Romur* and *Peoples* labels. He also recorded as Johnny Newbag for *Atlantic* and *Port*.

The next release under their own name was "Running Around Town," a song written by the entire group. The Twilights rehearsed every night, sometimes until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. Everything had to be perfect. *Swan* had a lot of confidence in the group. For the flip of "Running Around Town," The Twilights were handed "You Gotta Be Alone To Cry" right in the studio. Frank Slay said "This is how it goes," and played it on the piano. The group played around with it for 15 or 20 minutes, trying it different ways. They then recorded the song in three or four takes. *Swan* gave this release no promotion and it went nowhere.

*Swan* continued using Teddy & The Twilights to back other artists. In the Fall of 1962 they backed Philadelphia artist Mark Valentino (real name Anthony Busillo) on the dance record "The Push And Kick" (*Swan* 4121). The record reached

#27 on the Pop Charts.

At about the same time, the group again backed Brenda Johnson. By this time, *Swan* had given her a new stage name, Rochelle Johnson. Teddy & the Twilights sing background on Rochelle Johnson's "Playing The Field" b/w "Gypsy Ways" (*Swan* 4124).

Teddy & The Twilights' third release under their own name was a limbo tune written by Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman called "Bimini Bimbo". It was backed with a ballad written by Fred Cohen, "I'm Just Your Clown". *Swan* was pushing the limbo side and it broke in the Baltimore area. Thanks to the push of an area disc jockey, "Bimini Bimbo" made the Top 40 in Baltimore. For reasons unknown, the record did not catch on elsewhere.

After their success with "Woman...", the Twilights had gigs up and down the Eastern Seaboard, including Massachusetts, New York and the South. In Jersey City they did a show with Jackie Wilson, The Orlons, The Ronnettes (before they were popular), and Ronnie and The Hi-Lites. The group was a little worried about appearing on the same show with Jackie Wilson. They were the next to last act before Jackie, who was hot with his new single, "Baby Workout". The Twilights got together and decided not to let Jackie show them up. They went out on stage and did such an outstanding performance they lit the stadium up." After the show, the manager of Ronnie & The Hi-Lites came up to them and asked them to break away from *Swan* and join him, but the group refused.

Teddy and The Twilights prided themselves not only on their tight harmony but also on their appearance on stage.



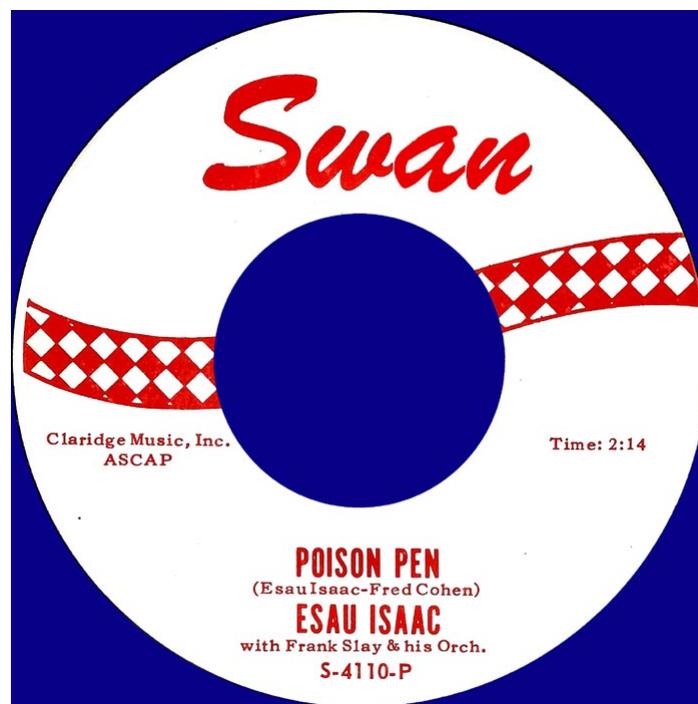
The Tiffanys, "The Pleasure Of Love," 1962  
 Flip side, "Atlanta" received some airplay in Georgia.  
 (From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



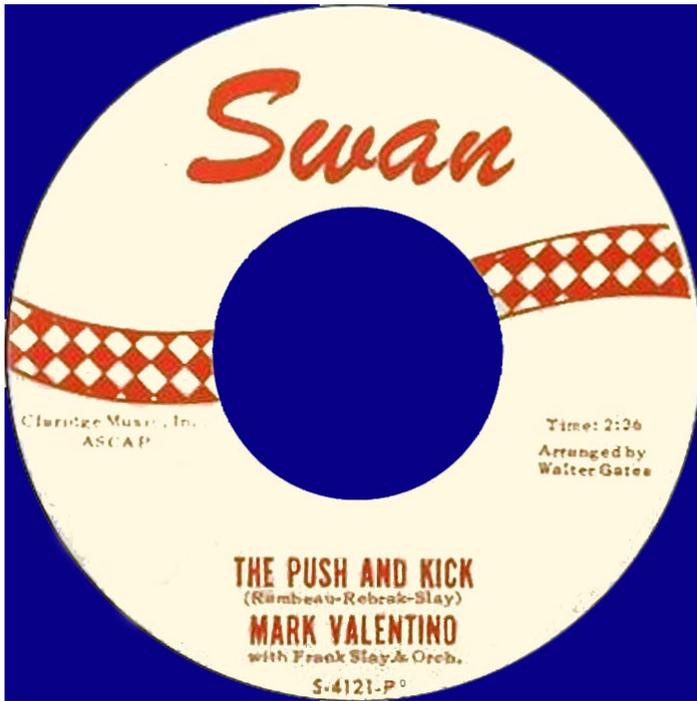
Teddy & The Twilights' "Woman Is A Man's Best Friend" (1962). Written by Fred Cohen.  
 (From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



Teddy & The Twilights' "Goodbye To Love" (1962)  
 Flip of "Woman..." this side has more of a 1950's flavor.  
 Written by Gerald Smith, the group's guitarist.  
 (From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



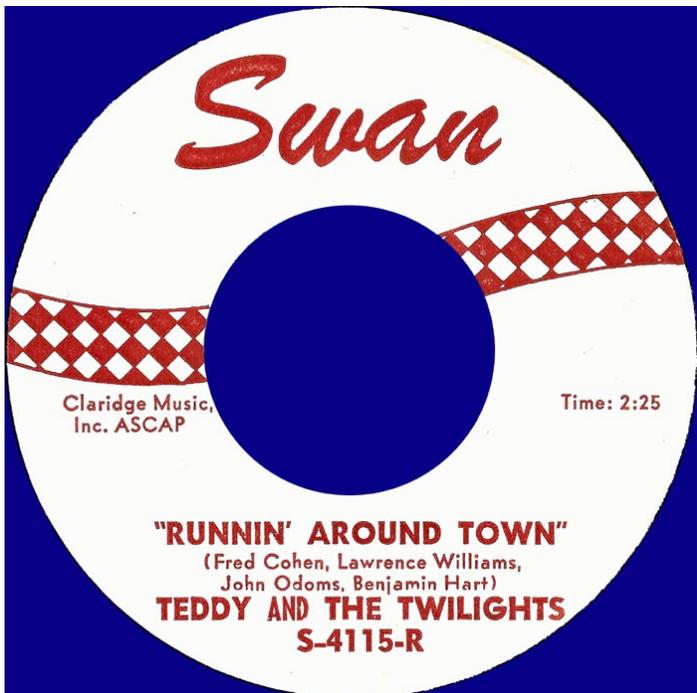
Teddy & The Twilights uncredited backup on Esau Isaac's  
 "Poison Pen" (1962). Written by Esau and Fred Cohen.  
 (From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



Teddy & the Twilights sing backup on Mark Valentino's "The Push And Kick" (1962).  
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



Teddy & The Twilights' backed Rochelle (Brenda) Johnson (1962).  
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



Teddy & The Twilights' "Runnin' Around Town" (1962)  
Written by the entire group.  
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



Teddy & The Twilights' Bimini Bimbo" (1962).  
An album was recorded but not released.  
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



**Gerald "Twig" Smith (far left) with the Modern Red Caps. Also in this group, former Castelles' George Grant (second from left) and former Dreams' George Tindley (middle). (From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)**

Every time they walked out on stage everything was perfect. No one was dressed differently. The one exception was the time the group went to Baltimore to promote "Bimini Bimbo". They were to appear on the local TV show of the DJ who broke their record in that area. Fred missed the train, however, and arrived late without his uniform. The group promptly stripped their road manager Skip Johnson, who was neatly dressed and about Fred's size and Fred had a uniform.

To go along with "Bimini Bimbo," The Twilights recorded a limbo album. *Swan* wanted to capitalize on *Cameo's* (another Philly label) success with Chubby Checker's "Limbo Rock". Fred Cohen and Frank Slay wrote most of the songs on the album. Aside from a demo copy that was made for the Twilights, the album was never released. Why *Swan* would go through the trouble to record this album and then not release it remains a mystery but perhaps it was because "Bimini Bimbo" did not do as well as they had hoped. One of the cuts on the album is a beautiful ballad called "Whispers In The Dark". The group rehearsed this song for three weeks. They were doing some back-up recordings for Mark Valentino one night and after they finished *Swan* still had the studio booked for another 45 minutes. Rather than waste the time left, *Swan* had The Twilights use the time to record. They spent about 20 minutes on "Whispers In The Dark". They later went back for a couple of overdubs and *Swan* pieced it together. The result was a great sounding ballad that *Swan* promised to push as a single but then never released.

Not all of the back-up work that Teddy and The Twilights did was for *Swan*. Bernie Bennick of *Swan* and Bernie Lowe of *Cameo* owed each other favors and lent out groups to one another. The Twilights were told one night that if they wanted to make a few extra dollars they should go and see Dave Appell of *Cameo Records*. When they got to *Cameo* they found The Bluenotes were already there. Dave Appell was trying to create a certain sound for one of Dee Dee Sharp's records, so he split the two groups up. He took Larry and Ben from The Twilights and the tenor lead [Franklin Peaker] and another singer from The Bluenotes and made a group right there. Larry couldn't recall the song they backed up Dee Dee Sharp on, however. On another occasion, the Twilights backed up Chubby Checker.

Once a promoter introduced Larry Williams to James Brown who was doing a show at The Uptown Theater. James

Brown was looking for a singer at the time and expressed an interest in Larry, but Larry explained to him that he was under contract to *Swan*.

The Twilights were disappointed that their records didn't go bigger than they did and blamed *Swan* for lack of promotion. *Swan* was busy promoting their big artists like Freddy Cannon and had little time for The Twilights.

After 14 years of harmonizing together, the group called it quits. Their last show was at Towne Hall on May 25, 1963. After talking about quitting for some time, the group became inactive. They had a contract to cut two records a year for *Swan*, but by the time the company called to find out what the group was going to do, they had gone their separate ways. Everyone was working and had families to support.

Fred Cohen began singing solo. For about six months he worked with The Pinky Roberts Review. Pinky was a singer/comedian who frequently worked the Northwest A.C. Café in Philly. After that Fred appeared in local clubs on his own. Gerald Smith got a job playing guitar for George Tindley and The Modern Red Caps. He is on all of their *Swan* recordings. Gerald stayed with George Tindley after the Modern Red Caps and is seen in photos of Tindley's next group, By George & Co. Joe Thomas played for The Impressions until he was killed some years back in an automobile accident.

Members of Teddy and The Twilights continued to get together and sing for fun occasionally through the 1970's. The group even tried to start their own recording company, the *Tanya* label in 1977, intending to record the local soul group Pat & The Blenders, which at the time included former Mohawk, Richard Tabron. Tabron was on the group's *Gamble* and *TSOP* label releases. We are not aware of any releases on *Tanya*. [Richard's brother, John Tabron had sung with Blenders lead, Pat Gordon, in a street corner group during the late 1950's that also included Bernie Lacy and future music icon, Kenny Gamble.] In the 1980's Richard Tabron joined the acappella group, Neighbors Complaint, where he often led "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered" on stage. Tabron stayed with Neighbors Complaint for about 15 years, until an illness forced him to retire. He has since passed on.

Larry Williams and his brother, John Odums are now deceased. Ben Hart is believed alive but could not be located for this article. Fred Cohen is alive and well, living in Philly.

### Notes

1. Interviews and conversations conducted by Charlie Horner, Steve Applebaum and Don Leins with Larry Williams and Fred Cohen (1976, 1977).
2. Charlie Horner's follow up conversations with Fred Cohen (2011).
3. Charlie Horner's conversations with Richard Taybron (1990's) and Neighbors Complaint's Bob Murphy (2011).
4. Charlie Horner & Steve Applebaum, "Teddy & The Twilights," *Yesterday's Memories*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1977).
5. Thanks also to Val & Patty Shively, Todd Baptista, Elaine Lewis, Don Leins, and Dave Brown for their assistance.

For more vocal group articles, photos, info, news, concert calendars and reviews, visit Charlie & Pamela Horner's website,  
[www.ClassicUrbanHarmony.net](http://www.ClassicUrbanHarmony.net)

