

Ghost Records: Vocal Group Records that (Probably) Don't Exist

by Charlie Horner

With contributions from Pamela Horner, George Frunzi, Bobby Diskin,
Val Shively, Sal Mondrone, Lou Silvani, Kenny Fuchs and Carl Tancredi

As a long-time record collector, I've often heard tell of super rare R&B vocal group records that are only rumored to exist. Collector, Bobby Diskin, calls them "ghost records". Everyone swears they are real, but no one can produce a copy. And each record has a story behind it, though we don't always know what the story is. Some are well known records that someone recalls seeing a red vinyl copy of. Others are 78 RPM records that inexplicably were never issued as 45's, though everything else on the label was. Some of these "ghost records" are out-and-out hoaxes. Others resulted from typos on printed lists or in magazines. Still others are real records of which all known copies have been lost or destroyed. This article is certainly not a listing of all ghost records. Seasoned collectors know far more of these stories than I do. It is my hope that readers will contribute enough additional tales of such records to assemble a "Part 2" in a future issue. Indeed, quite a few collectors already have helped with this article.

Here are just a few discs that some of us have been searching for without success for many a year. If there's one thing I've learned in life, it's to never make absolute statements. So I'll never say any of these records absolutely don't exist. I will say the existence of some is improbable. But even in this day and age, some incredible finds are still turning up. Whoever thought a 45 RPM of "Rosemarie" by the 5 Chimes on *Betta* would turn up, but one eventually did. Again, we welcome your stories. If you have a record that I say probably doesn't exist, you can email me a photo at CUH@att.net. Please, no fake photos! I can spot a PhotoShopped

image a mile away.

And for collectors who have acquired almost everything on your want lists over the years, here are a few more to look for.

The Spaniels - "Jumpin' From 6 To 6" b/w "Trouble In My House" - *Big Town* #115 (1956)

What? A Spaniels record from 1956 that we didn't know about? This rumor started many years ago when the record was spotted in the September 1957 issue of the *One Spot Record Finder*. The *Record Finder* was used by record stores to look up and order records that customers asked for. This thick paperback book supposedly listed all records that came out between 1953 and September 1956. There it was, in Section 2a, listed under Spaniels after all the *Vee Jay* records. "bt 115" stood for *Big Town* #115. It was also cross-referenced that way in the song titles listing, so it wasn't just a typo. However, in 1956, the Spaniels were firmly committed to recording for *Vee Jay* in Chicago and *Big Town* was a West Coast label. I asked the late Spaniels bass, Gerald Gregory, about the titles and label. He said the Spaniels never recorded for *Big Town* and he was not familiar with either title. Further research indicated that *Big Town* #115 was "Jumpin' From 6 to 6" b/w "Trouble In My House" alright, but the artist was not the Spaniels but blues legend Jimmy Wilson and his band. So, there you have it. The *Record Finder* book was just wrong in who they credited the record to. You can listen to Jimmy Wilson singing "Jumpin' From 6 To 6" on YouTube. Hey, wait. There's a weak vocal group on that record! Could it be? Nah!



SPANGLER, Patu	Only In My Dreams - Polka Dot Eyes ...	amp 1001
SPANIELS, The	Baby Come Along With Me - Since I Fell For You ...	vj 202
	Dear Heart - Why Don't You Dance ...	vj 189
	False Love - Do You Really ...	vj 178
	Painted Picture - Hey Sister Lizzie ...	vj 154
	Goodnight Sweetheart - You Don't Move Me ...	vj 107
	Dont'cha Go - Do Wah...	vj 131
	Bells Ring Out - Housecleaning...	vj 103
	Baby It's You - Bounce...	vj 101
	Let's Make Up - Play it Cool...	vj 116
	Jumpin' From 6 to 6/Trouble In My House...	bt 115
SPANIER (Muggsy) JAZZ BAND ●	My Wild Irish Rose - Washington and Lee Swing...	de 29857
SPANN, Otis	Five Spot - It Must Have Been the Devil...	ch 807

4101

Record No.
45-102
45 R.P.M.
Pub: Slotkin

ESTELLE*(Walker-Natson)*

THE BELLTONES
Accompanied by
The Three Rockets

4102

Record No.
45-102
45 R.P.M.
Pub: Slotkin

PROMISE LOVE*(Walker-Natson)*

THE BELLTONES
Accompanied by
The Three Rockets

4103

Record No.
45-103
45 R.P.M.
Pub: Slotkin

THIS SILVER RING*(Pagovoy-Epstein)***THE CASTELLES**

4104

Record No.
45-103
45 R.P.M.
Pub: Slotkin

MIDSUMMER'S NIGHT*(Vance)***THE CASTELLES****The Belltones - "Crying Blues" b/w "Estelle" - Grand #102 (1953)**

Very few collectors are fortunate enough to own an original copy of "Estelle" by the Belltones on Philadelphia's *Grand* label. But those who do, know quite well that the flip side is "Promise Love". Well, years ago, when Belltones' member Irv Natson was being interviewed on my radio program, he said that the label had given him a 78 RPM copy of "Estelle" and the flip side was "Crying Blues". It's easy to say Irv was mistaken, but he distinctly remembered "Crying Blues" because he wrote the song! *Grand* records were pressed by *Gotham* and I've seen the label-proofs for most of the *Grand* records, but "Crying Blues" was not among them. No stock copy has ever surfaced. Irv said he no longer had the 78, so one might assume he once had an acetate (test pressing) and that the song was unreleased. Speaking of unreleased Belltones' records, there have long been rumors of another Belltones record, "Carol" that was in a private collection. Irv recalled recording another song and thought it might have been called "Carol" but he wasn't sure. At any rate, he felt sure it was never released. Val Shively believes an acetate called "Carol" by the Belltones was found, but it was by a different Belltones group, possibly the pop-sounding Belltones on *Rama* that recorded "The Wedding" and as such is of little value to collectors. When *Relic* went through the *Grand* label master tapes, no trace or "Crying Blues" or "Carol" could be found.

The Castelles - "Midsummer's Night" b/w "This Silver Ring" - Grand #103 (1954)

Actually, *Grand Records* has been the source of a number of group harmony mysteries. The late Ron Everett, bass singer for the Castelles, was a friend of mine and would on occasion would drop by my radio program. I once asked Ron whether he ever sang lead on Castelles' songs and he replied that, yes, he had recorded a song called "Midsummer's Night" with the group. Some time later, while looking through the *Gotham* files, I came across a *Grand* label-proof, listing "Midsummer's Night" as the flip of "This Silver Ring". Now everyone knows that the flip of *Grand* #103, "This Silver Ring," is "Wonder Why". Why *Grand Records* would type-set (and possibly print) labels for *Grand* #103 with "Midsummer's Night" and then not release the record we don't know. In 1995, *Relic Records* finally released "Midsummer's Night" on their Castelles' CD, taken from the original tape. But no 45 or 78 RPM copies of this side have ever been seen.

Oddly, among the *Gotham* files were also *Grand* label-proofs of *Grand* #105, with "Baby Can't You See" instead of "Do You Remember". "Baby Can't You See" was eventually scrapped for "Do You Remember". It eventually made it to *Grand* #109.

The Orioles - "I Cover The Waterfront" 10-Inch LP - Jubilee - 1953

Back in the day, there was a rumor of an Orioles 10" LP on the *Jubilee* label. Supposedly the cover

Label-proof for *Grand Records* 45's of the Belltones' "Estelle" and the Castelles' "This Silver Ring" with "Midsummer's Night" as a flip side.

showed a melancholy Sonny Til standing on some dock, looking out over the murky water. *Jubilee Records* did start issuing 10" LP's around 1954 so this was plausible. And *Jubilee* would later be one of the first independent labels to issue albums by R&B groups (Four Tunes, Cadillacs, etc.). But in 1954 and 1955, *Jubilee's* 10" albums concentrated mostly on party records by Kermit Schafer ("Pardon My Bloopers") and all the catalog numbers are accounted for. When Sonny Til was a guest on my radio show, I asked him about such an album release. He told me the Orioles never did such an album.

The Moonglows - "210 Train" b/w "My Gal" - Chance #1161 (on a yellow and black 45 RPM label) (1954).

The Moonglows fifth and final release on the *Chance* label is undoubtedly their rarest. Because earlier *Chance* recordings by the Moonglows and Flamingos appeared on black and yellow labels, record collectors mistakenly assumed that the few copies of "219 Train" that did surface with black and off-white labels must be promotional or "dj" copies. No copies of "219 Train" have ever surfaced with black and yellow *Chance* labels that I know of. When *Chance* released the Moonglows' "219 Train" in September of 1954, they were within a few weeks of closing their doors. In fact, the Moonglows had already moved over to the *Chess* label. None of the black and white *Chance* labels say "promo" or "dj copy" on them and it appears *Chance* had just



Seen here, the Moonglows ultra-rare "219 Train" on the black & almost white *Chance* label. Do any copies exist on the more familiar black & yellow labels or did the near bankrupt *Chance* simply run out of yellow ink after #1156?



Did Jubilee ever issue an Orioles' Ten Inch "I Cover The Waterfront" Album?

dropped the yellow color from its label, possibly to save printing costs. At any rate, the Moonglows' previous record ("I Was Wrong" - *Chance* 1156) is known on both black and yellow, and black and white. Subsequent *Chance* releases appear to be only on black and white labels including the last Flamingos *Chance* record, #1162, "Blues In A Letter".

The Starfires - "You Are Mine" b/w "Be My Love" - *Bernice* #202 (1958)

While working on my article on Wally Osborne & the Starfires, the topic of *Bernice* #202 came up. *Bernice* #202 ("You Are Mine") is by a group called the Supremes, not the Starfires. But some years back the record was mistakenly put on a record list as the Starfires. Ever since, collectors have been looking for this second *Bernice* record by the Starfires. Wally Osborne told me the Starfires only made on record for *Bernice* (#201) and never recorded as the Supremes. They did not record "You Are Mine".

The Midnighters - "Annie Had A Miscarriage" - *Federal* (1954)

Back in 1954, Hank Ballard & the Midnighters (as the Royals) recorded a then risqué song called "Work With Me Annie". It was soon followed by numerous answer records from the Midnighters and others. These included "Annie Had A Baby" (Midnighters), "Annie's Aunt Fannie" (Midnighters), "Annie's Answer" (Hazel McCollum & El Dorados), "My Name Ain't Annie" (Linda Hayes & Platters), "Annie Pulled A Hum-Bug" (Midnighters), "I'm The Father Of Annie's



Besides the bootleg (above), does anyone have a copy of the Montereys on Nestor (45 or 78)?

Baby" (Danny Taylor), "Annie Kicked The Bucket" (Nu-Tones) and many more. Rumor has it the Midnighters recorded one more "Annie" record - one in such bad taste that it was never released. We've heard that a single pressing of "Annie Had A Miscarriage" was given to a popular Pittsburgh radio disc jockey as thanks for playing Midnighters records. Members of the Midnighters have denied that any such record was recorded. The disc jockey has since passed on, so we'll never know for sure.

The Montereys - "Someone Like You" b/w "Train Whistle Blues - Nestor #15 (original 45 only) (1956)

This is an interesting one. The Montereys recorded "Someone Like You" backed with "Train Whistle Blues" ca. 1956. It is said that the record first came out on the Nestor label. Shortly thereafter, the record came out on the Teenage label (#1001). The Teenage label pressings used Nestor master numbers and supposedly Nester stampers with Nestor matrix numbers in the deadwax. The Teenage label copies are known on 45 RPM, though are extremely rare. But to the best of our knowledge, no original label 45 RPM copies exist on Nestor. [There are bootleg copies around on Nestor.] We've heard there are 78 RPM copies known on the Nestor label, but we haven't seen one. Does anyone out there have one? It's strange that there are no 45 RPM copies of Nestor #15. We believe there are 45's of Nestor #13 and we archive 45's of #16 and #17. [Thanks to George Frunzi and Val Shively for help with this item.]

The Packards - "Ding Dong" b/w "Dream Of Love" - Pla-Bac #105 (1956) (45-only).

The Packards are said to have recorded "Dream Of Love" b/w "Ding Dong" for the Pla-Bac label, but the only 45's that exist of it are on Hy Weiss' Paradise label. However, the Paradise label copies have Pla-Bac numbers stamped into the deadwax (PB-105-A and PB-105-B). There are no 45 RPM copies of the record existing on Pla-Bac. Are there any 78's of Pla-Bac #105 known? We haven't seen any. Of course, the Packards did make another record for Pla-Bac—"Ladise" (Pla-Bac #106). [Thanks to Val Shively for this one.]

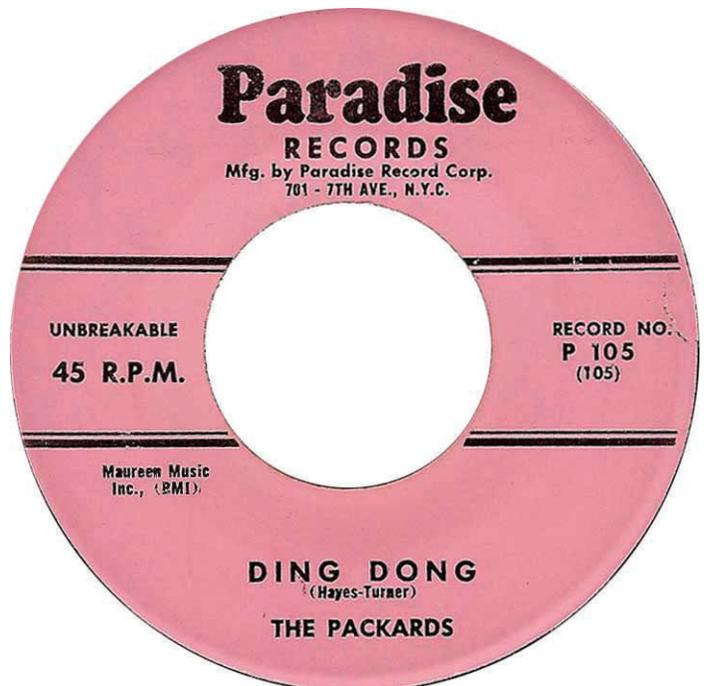
The Vidaltones - "Forever" b/w "Someone To Love" - Skylark #???? (1962)

Val just pointed out to me that Josie #900 "Forever" by the Vidaltones has printed on the labels, "Produced by Skylark Records". Could it be that Josie is not the first label for "Forever"? Now you see why it's so hard being a collector Things like this keep me up at night!

The Heart Throbs - "Such Pain Inside" - Harbor

I became acquainted with title in 1970, though Val Shively told me the story goes back years further. KBBA (Keep the Big Beat Alive) was a the first ever group fanzine produced by Lenny Goldberg that was sold at Times Square Records in the early 1960's. "It used to sell for a quarter," recalled Val, "And it would have people's want lists on the back. The Heart Throbs' "Such Pain Inside" was always on there. 'Will pay anything for this record!' It was just made up.

The record was still sought after in 1970. Read-



Here's our copy of the Packards "Ding Song" b/w "Dream Of Love" on the Paradise label with Pla-Bac stampers. Does anyone have it on Pla-Bac #105 as a 45 or 78?

ers of *Record Exchanger* magazine were encouraged to send in their lists of the rarest vocal group records of all time. We all followed the column to see what rare records we were missing. In *Record Exchanger* #2 (March 1970), the rarest record list included the Heart Throbs' "Such Pain Inside" along with discs like the Five Sharps' "Stormy Weather," the Hornets on *States* and the Five Chances on *Chance*. I started looking for the Heart Throbs record until the next issue of *Record Exchanger* came out. In that issue's Forum column, "G.G. of NY" wrote in that "There is strong reason to believe that this record [the Heart Throbs] does not, nor ever did exist, but was a figment of Lenny Goldberg's imagination (to use a term of understatement)." The existence of the record is believed to be a hoax.

The Mystery Quartette—???? - Essex #7?? (78 RPM) (1950).

Some years ago, Don Leins and I stumbled upon two 78 RPM records by the Mystery Quartette on Philadelphia's *Essex* label's 700 series. Yes, in 1950, long before Dave Miller had the more familiar orange colored *Essex* label (best known for early Bill Haley records), he produced a red labeled *Essex* series. All releases on this series are extremely rare. This 700-series lasted only 14 releases, the titles of only 9 of which are known. In fact, if you totaled up every copy of all nine known releases, I doubt there are even 20 red label *Essex* 78's in existence. Most are single surviving copies in private collections. Well, it turns out that our friend Joe Grimaldi of the Ecstasies knew one of the Mystery Quartette members, Frank "Skeets" Squillace, and brought him down to my radio show. [The complete story of the Mystery

Quartette was detailed by Bob Bosco in *Echoes of the Past* #31].

Now, here's the rest of the story. The Mystery Quartette's first record, "Don't Cry Darling" (*Essex* #706—three known copies) has master numbers MQ-1 and MQ-2. The group's second record, "Pretty Baby" (*Essex* #713—one known copy) has master numbers MQ-5 and MQ-6. As *Essex* master numbers reflect the artist (MQ = Mystery Quartette), what happened to sides MQ-3 and MQ-4? It's easy to speculate they were unreleased (Skeets did not remember), but there are still five releases by *Essex* that are unaccounted for.

I asked Buccaneers lead, Sonny Smith, who'd worked at the *Essex* pressing plant in 1950 and he seemed to recall the Mystery Quartette having a third release. But he thought the third release might have been on an *Essex* subsidiary, like *BBS*. I'm not willing to list this one as non-existing yet. I'm still looking. But then, I'm still trying to find *Essex* #113 to go with my #706.

Ronald & the Vells - "Juke Box & A Candy Store" ?? - R&M (1958)

Some years ago, collector Kenny Fuchs found out that a co-worker named Ronnie once recorded with a doo wop group from Long Island called the Vells. The Vells made a record for the *R&M* label (same label as the Markels' "The Letter Of Love"). Just after the record was pressed, the group's lead announced that he was entering the army and would not be around for promoting the disc. The owner of *R&M* is said to have become so enraged, he destroyed all the copies of the record. Ronnie told Kenny that he had a copy somewhere, but could not locate it. Bobby Diskin has a photo of the Vells and even better, a photo of the Markels at *R&M Records*, with a photo of the Vells behind them on the wall. No copies of the Vells record have ever turned up. [Thanks to Bobby Diskin and Kenny Fuchs for this one.]

The Jets - "The Lovers" b/w "Drag It Home Baby" - Rainbow #201 (1953) [45 RPM red vinyl]

Back when Sal Mondrone was just a beginning collector, he, Sam Wood and Frankie Vendola visited Sam Goodie's record store on their way to Times Square Records. On the counter they found a box of store stock 45's on the *Rainbow* label. Flipping through the records, Sal pulled out three mint copies of "The Lovers" by the Jets, all on red vinyl. Holding the three copies in his hand, Sal asked Sam Wood if these were any good. Sam told him these were just more junk on the *Rainbow* label, so Sal threw the records back in the box and moved on. [The Jets were actually the Bachelors who recorded on *Aladdin* and *Royal Roost*.] Over the years the Jets record has only turned up on 78's from which it was eventually bootlegged to a 45. But after that fateful day, no one has ever again seen an original 45 of "The Lovers" by the Jets. [Thanks to Sal Mondrone for this story.]



One of two known records by the Mystery Quartette on *Essex* 700 series. Is there a third?



Above is a bootleg of the Five Keys record on Groove. No legitimate copies have ever turned up and probably never will.

The Cardinals—“Shouldn’t I Know” b/w “Please Don’t Leave Me” - Atlantic #938 (1951) [45 RPM]

In January 1951, *Atlantic Records* announced in *Billboard Magazine* that they were getting into the 45 RPM business with their two previous hits, Ruth Brown’s “Teardrops From My Eyes” (*Atlantic* #919) and Joe Morris-Laurie Tate’s “Anytime, Anywhere, Anyplace” (*Atlantic* #914) their first pressings in the new media. Four months later they announced the first release by the Cardinals, “Shouldn’t I Know” (*Atlantic* #938) which eventually reached #7 on the R&B Charts. Cardinals’ lead singer, Ernie Warren told Val Shively he once had a box of 45’s of his group’s first record. Still, here we are in 2016 and no original 45 RPM copies of “Shouldn’t I Know” have ever been found.

Sal Mondrone got to know *Atlantic* head, Ahmet Ertegun. Ertegun told Sal that *Atlantic* had actually pressed 100–200 copies of “Shouldn’t I Know” on 45 RPM and was prepared to send them out to radio stations, but for some reason decided against it. The records were left in *Atlantic*’s basement and were probably thrown out. [Thanks to Val Shively and Sal Mondrone for this story.]

The Five Keys— “I’ll Follow You” b/w “Lawdy Miss Mary” - Groove #31 (1954)

On July 1, 1954, the Five Keys recorded four songs for *RCA-Victor*’s *Groove* subsidiary. Through the research of Ferdie Gonzalez and Marv Goldberg, we’ve learned that *Groove* slated the release of *Groove* #31—The Five Keys—“I’ll Follow You” b/w “Lawdy Miss

Mary” for August 9. Label-proofs for 45’s and 78’s have been found indicating that maybe labels were printed. However the *RCA* files also indicate that the record was withdrawn on August 9. While some speculate that promotional copies may have gotten out, *Groove* label expert Carl Tancredi doubts the existence of the record. *Capitol Records* announced the signing of the 5 Keys on August 29 and *RCA* had probably gotten word of that beforehand. The time lag was just too short for copies to have gotten out. The record has been bootlegged. [Thanks to Carl Tancredi for this story.]

The Skyliners - “Since I Fell For You?” b/w “I’ll Die” - Motown #1046 (1963)

This record has repeatedly turned up on list after list of *Motown* singles. Supposedly two test pressings exist in collections somewhere. But no matter how many times this is repeated it is highly improbable. First, we don’t know of the Skyliners ever recording for *Motown*. Secondly, the record came out on *Atco Records* (#6270). Thirdly, *Motown* #1046 was originally scheduled for the Serenaders’ “I’ll Cry Tomorrow” which was pulled for the *V.I.P.* label and the *Motown* number #1046 given to Amos Milburn. When researching *Motown* sides, I generally rely on Reginald J. Bartlette’s *Off The Record: Motown By Master Number, 1959–1989*. It has no listing by the Skyliners.

The Viscounts - “Saki-Laki-Waki” b/w “Oo-Oo-We” - Vega #1003

Another strange story involves “Saki-Laki-Waki” by the Viscounts. Most likely the song originated as an unreleased acetate taped off of an Alan Freed radio



This copy pressed because so many people were looking for the Viscounts record. There no authentic copies that we know of.

program. While collectors looked for originals of the song, it was pressed on the *Vegas* label in the 1970's to satisfy demand. Since no flipside was available, "You Know I Love You Baby" by Fats Jr. and the Skyscrapers (Alton #258) was re-titled "Oo-Oo-Wee" and used on the reverse side. There are no legitimate copies of the Viscounts "Saki-Laki-Waki" [*Thanks to Val Shively for this story.*]

The Lyres - "The Ship Of Love" b/w "Playboy" - J&G 101 (1953) (45 RPM Only)

This is the first record by the New Haven CT group that became the Nutmegs. Calling themselves the Lyres, the group recorded an early version of "Ship Of Love" for Charlie Johnson's J&G label. There seems to be general consensus among collectors that all copies made were 78's as no 45's have ever surfaced (except for bootlegs). Even the 78's of this one are very scarce. I've heard rumors that the owner ended up putting all the copies in the trash, but that seems to be a commonly repeated story when a record is really rare.

The Five Sharps—"Stormy Weather" b/w "Sleepy Cowboy" - Jubilee #5104 (1952) (45 RPM)

Alright, I guess I have to include this, though I rather not retell the whole story of Slim Rose' pet raccoon, Teddy, sitting on the (then) only known copy (on 78 RPM) at Times Square Records and the subsequent search to find any copy of the group record "Holy Grail". Anyone reading this magazine should already know that story. Now that a couple copies have surfaced on 78's

(and sold for ridiculously high prices), I'd like to concentrate on the plausibility of a 45 existing. There are what, 16 Orioles records on *Jubilee* with earlier numbers on 45's? There are earlier records by the Marylanders and Enchanters and numerous single artists on 45's. Sure, many of these earlier *Jubilee* sides are very rare, possibly only one or two copies known. And if those copies hadn't been rescued from extinction by some collector, we'd think no copies of those were ever made, too. Was *Jubilee* #5104 ever made on a 45 (other than bootlegs or the reissue on the *Bim Bam Boom* label), and if so will one turn up someday?

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This article was written to stimulate discussions. We can go on and on with these "ghost" records but alas, our space is limited. We would like to write a "Part 2" of this article, based on your comments, additions, corrections and stories of records that have eluded you over the years. Write to this magazine or email me at CUH@att.net. In the meantime, keep looking. Some of these records might actually be out there after all!



This is a bootleg of the Lyres' "Ship Of Love" on a maroon color J&G label. No 45's have ever been found and while we've never seen the 78, we hear it's on a blue and silver label.



www.ClassicUrbanHarmony.net is back!

After our old site was frozen in cyberspace for the past four months, we now have a fabulous new website design. We just have to learn how to use the software and add back the content that was in our old site. That will take some time, as the old site had almost 300 pages. But we know you'll come to love the new website as much as we do. We've already added many new photos and updated our events calendar and many activities. Plus, for the first time, our site is searchable.

Please check out our website and go back often to see all that we are adding. We are all things vocal harmony—Classic Urban Harmony!
- Charlie & Pam Horner