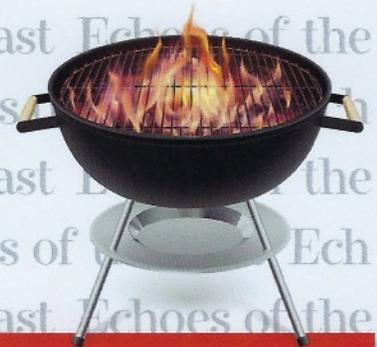
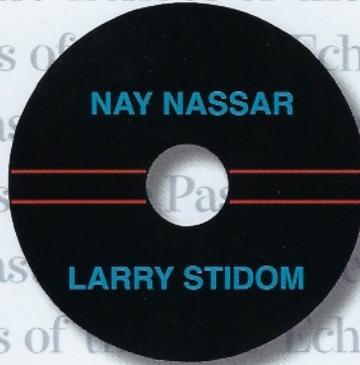
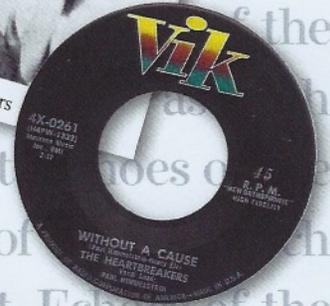


ECHOES OF THE PAST



Who Knew???



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Paul Himmelstein & The Heartbreakers

by Charlie Horner
with contributions from Pamela Horner

For a group that only recorded a couple records, Paul Himmelstein & the Heartbreakers are one of the most recognized groups among collectors of mid-1950's teenage R&B vocal group records. Yet in spite of Rockin' Ray Levy's 1976 article on the Heartbreakers and a 2005 oral history of Paul Himmelstein by the Bronx African American History Project now on line, there is still a lot of the Heartbreakers story yet to be told. This article will hopefully fill in some of the gaps.

Paul Himmelstein was born in the Bronx, New York on December 21, 1940. He was one of fourteen children born to white Jewish parents. Paul's father worked as a truck driver during the week and drove a cab on weekends. In Paul's early years the Prospect and Jennings Avenues area was mostly white but by the time he was five it was predominantly African American. This was the Morrisania section of the Bronx that gave rise to R&B vocal pioneer groups like the Chords, Mellows, Wrens, Dean Barlow & the Crickets and many more.

Paul grew up hearing black music. As a younger, Paul recalls vocal groups singing in back of his building and people throwing money to them. In his own home, he heard white pop singers but when he visited the homes of his black friends their radios were always tuned to black gospel. At first Paul never considered himself a singer. His older brother Larry could sing and was often asked to harmonize with neighborhood street corner groups. But things changed when Paul competed as a soloist on a televised youth talent show.

"I was eight or nine years old and sang 'P.S. I Love You,'" said Paul. Paul recalled being picked for the show by Ed Sullivan. From then on everyone in the



The Heartbreakers

neighborhood knew that Paul could sing. His voice closely resembled that of Frankie Lymon. Paul joined a group called the Heartbreakers made up of friends from the neighborhood. Beside Paul Himmelstein (lead), the group consisted of Bobby "Count" Higgs, Henry "Rocky" Eli and a singer remembered only as "Torch". The group sang at talent shows at PS 99 and elsewhere. When Torch became ill and died, his spot in the group was taken by Henry "Stoney" Jackson.

Born in 1938, Henry R. "Stoney" Jackson also grew up in the Morrisania section of the Bronx around the

same block as the Chords of “Sh-Boom” fame. As a teenager, Stoney began singing with some neighborhood friends, calling themselves the Tru-Tones. Besides Stoney Jackson, the other members of the Tru-Tones were Alfred Lewis, Charles Brooks, Willie Williams and Benny Ramsey. The Tru-Tones auditioned for and made one recording for Hy Weiss’ *Old Town* record label. Their song “Why Oh Why” was written and arranged by Stoney Jackson. Unfortunately, *Old Town* didn’t release the record at the time. It would find its way to a CD years later along with numerous other previously unreleased sides.

“The Tru-Tones couldn’t get a break so I joined another neighborhood group, Paul Himmelstein & the Heartbreakers,” recalled Stoney. “They approached me about singing with them when one of their members, ‘Torch,’ died.”

In 1956, the Heartbreakers entered the weekly amateur contests at Harlem’s Apollo Theatre and won four weeks in a row in 1956.

“Every Wednesday you’d get \$25 if you win and that’s to split with four guys,” said Paul. “And you can only go four times and after your fourth consecutive win, you get to appear for a week with the big guys, the professionals. That in turn makes you a professional from that point on.”

Apollo amateur night performances were rarely ever recorded but it so happened that during one of the Heartbreakers performances *Vanguard Records* was taping segments for an LP they were planning. Titled “A Night At The Apollo” the album included



The Heartbreakers: (left to right):
Henry Eli, Paul Himmelstein,
Stoney Jackson, Bobby Higgs.

live Apollo Theatre performances by comedienne Jackie “Moms” Mabley, impressionist George Kirby, tap dancers Coles & Atkins and the Apollo Band of the year (actually Count Basie’s band). Also included on the album was an entire amateur night, including the Heartbreakers singing an up tempo rendition of the Wrens’ “Come Back My Love.”



Paul Himmelstein & the Heartbreakers singing at the Apollo Theatre

Vanguard Records paid the Heartbreakers \$40 each for the right to use their live performance.” The album was released in May of 1956 (*Vanguard* #9006).

On the strength of their amateur contest performances, the Heartbreakers returned to the Apollo for a week’s shows, opening for the Moonglows and Dizzy Gillespie in June, 1956.

Before long, local songwriter Shirley Elliston (Shirley Ellis of “The Name Game” fame) who had written “Lu Lu” and “Pretty Wild” started managing the Heartbreakers. The group signed with *Vik Records*, a subsidiary to *RCA Victor*. In January 1957, they recorded four songs for *Vik*: “Without A Cause,” “One Two I Love You,” “My Love” and “Love You Till The Day I Die.” The latter two were written by Shirley Elliston.

“Without A Cause” was released first and immediately drew the attention of deejay Alan Freed. Freed had the Heartbreakers on his radio program, as did Jocko Henderson. Freed also added the Heartbreakers to his big Easter Jubilee of Stars concert at the Brooklyn Paramount Theatre, April 19 through 27, 1957. That concert had numerous acts including Charlie Gracie, Buddy Knox, Jimmy Bowen, Bo Diddley and vocal groups, the Dell Vikings, Cellos, Cletones, G-Clefs, Pearls, Harptones and Solitaires.

From there the Heartbreakers made two appearances on Dick Clark’s *Bandstand*, one for the Philadelphia



audience and a second appearance once the program went national as *American Bandstand*.

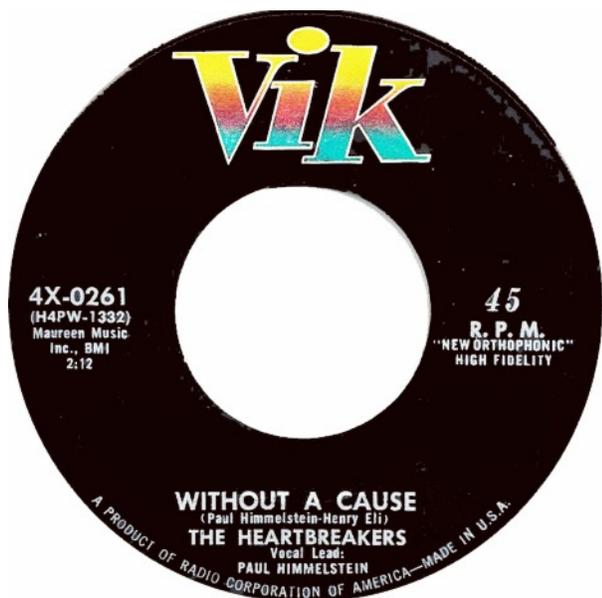
“Love You Till The Day I Die” b/w “My Love” was issued next by *Vik* but didn’t do as well as the first release.

Unfortunately, that’s about as far as the Heartbreakers story went. “I think I was about seventeen when it was over for me,” said Paul. “Because I never worked again [in the music business]. I never pushed it because I didn’t know how to ... back then.”

Not the case for Henry “Stoney” Jackson. The whole time Stoney Jackson was with the Heartbreakers, he continued singing with his first group, the *Tru-Tones*.

The *Tru-Tones* were being managed by Coley Wallace. Coley Wallace was a heavyweight boxer and movie actor. Born in Jacksonville, Florida in 1927, as a 21-year-old he defeated future heavyweight champion Rocky Marciano in the 1948 finals of the New York Golden Gloves Tournament. As a professional, Marciano would go on to win his next 49 bouts.

Coley Wallace also had a career as an actor. He starred in the 1953 film, “The Joe Louis Story,”





where he played Louis himself. Coley would go on to appear in the films “Careb Gold” (1957), “Raging Bull” (1980) and “Rooftops” (1989). By 1957 he had retired from boxing to devote his time to acting while working as an instructor at the Tyler Barber College, a barber school on 113th Street in New York City. In 1957, Coley recorded a self-penned Rock & Roll song for *Vik Records* called “Baby You Knock Me Out” but we don’t believe it ever was released.

“Coley Wallace heard our group,” recalled Stoney. “He was running the Tyler Barber School at the time and he invited the Tru-Tones down to audition for him. We went in the back and auditioned. He liked us. We could sing anything.”

At that time Stoney was good friends with Lenny Welch whom he introduced to Coley Wallace. Coley took the Tru-Tones to audition for *Decca Records*. Lenny went along and ended up auditioning also. The end result was that Lenny Welch was signed to *Decca Records* and the Tru-Tones were not, though Stoney was sure the Tru-tones backed Lenny on his first record, “My One Sincere.”

Stoney Jackson continued in music. In the early 1960’s when Lenny Welch took Stoney Jackson to

Asbury Park to meet some of his old singing friends, Stoney ended up recording with the V-Eights (*Vibro* label). Stoney later sang with the Long Island group, the Blenders (no recordings) and had a solo record “Where Is My Baby” (*Musicitone* label).

For more on the Stoney Jackson story, V-Eights, Lenny Welch and R&B music from Asbury Park, see our forthcoming book, “Springwood Avenue Harmony: The Unique Musical Legacy of Asbury Park’s West Side, Volume 2, 1946 – 1980.

Resources

Charlie Horner’s interview with Henry “Stoney” Jackson, 6 May, 2010

Himmelstein, Paul. November 11, 2005. Interview with the Bronx African American History Project. BAAHP Digital Archive at Fordham University.

Rockin’ Ray Levy, “The Other Heartbreakers,” *Yesterday’s Memories*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1976, p. 20 - 21.

Hearbreakers & Tru-Tones Discography

45's

Heartbreakers

Vik 0261 - One Two I Love You 57
- Without A Cause

Vik 0299 - My Love 57
- Love You Till The day I Die

Vik VDJ6 EP - Without A Cause 57
- Love You Till The day I Die

Fordham 109 - Come back My Love (live) 64

Vanguard 9093 - Come back My Love (live) 75

Tru-Tones

(As by Lenny Welch)

Decca 9-30637 - My One Sincere 57

LP's

Heartbreakers

Vanguard LP 9006 - "A Night At The Apollo"
contains "Come Back My Love" 56

CD's

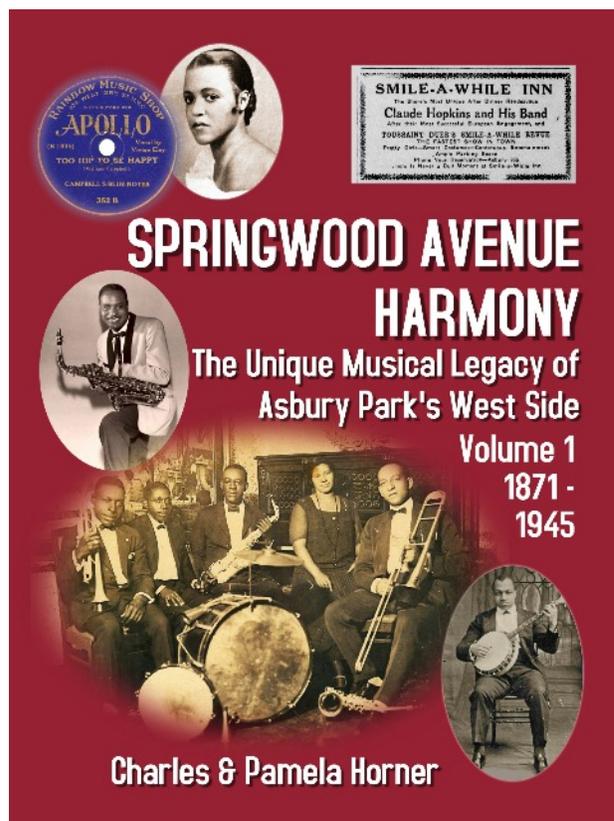
Tru-Tones

Ace CD 433 "Old Town Doo Wop Volume 1"
contains "Why Oh Why"

The *Fordham* and *Vanguard* 45's are bootlegs of the *Vanguard* album cut. Records by the group the Hearbreakers on *RCA* are a different (earlier) group. Some of the earlier Heartbreakers group records have been bootlegged on the *Vik* label but are not the Paul Himmelstein group.

For more articles, photos, videos, concert listings and everything group harmony, visit our web page, www.ClassicUrbanHarmony.net.

We also have a free email newsletter. To subscribe email us at CUH@att.net. - Charlie & Pam Horner



Volume 1 of our book on black music from Asbury Park NJ is finally out and available for purchase on **Amazon.com**. It's been 10 years in the making. Volume 2 (1946 - 1980) will be out later this year. Since just after its founding in 1871,

Asbury Park, New Jersey, has been a "music city". Yet, through much of its history, Asbury Park has been segregated. While much is known about the musicians who played the seaside resort's beachfront venues, until now, little has been written about the music of the shadow city just across the railroad tracks. **Springwood Avenue Harmony** details the history of music from Asbury Park's predominantly African American West Side from 1871 through 1945. It includes the genres of Spirituals, Ragtime, Stride Piano, Jazz, Black Vaudeville, Blues, Big Band, Gospel and Pop music. The lives of West Side singers and musicians long forgotten are finally given recognition. Also covered are the churches, theaters, nightclubs and entertainment venues that made up the music scene along Springwood Avenue. The book has close to 200 rare photos/flyers and is drawn from more than 700 documented news clippings, journals, books and interviews. It is fully indexed and contains an extensive bibliography.